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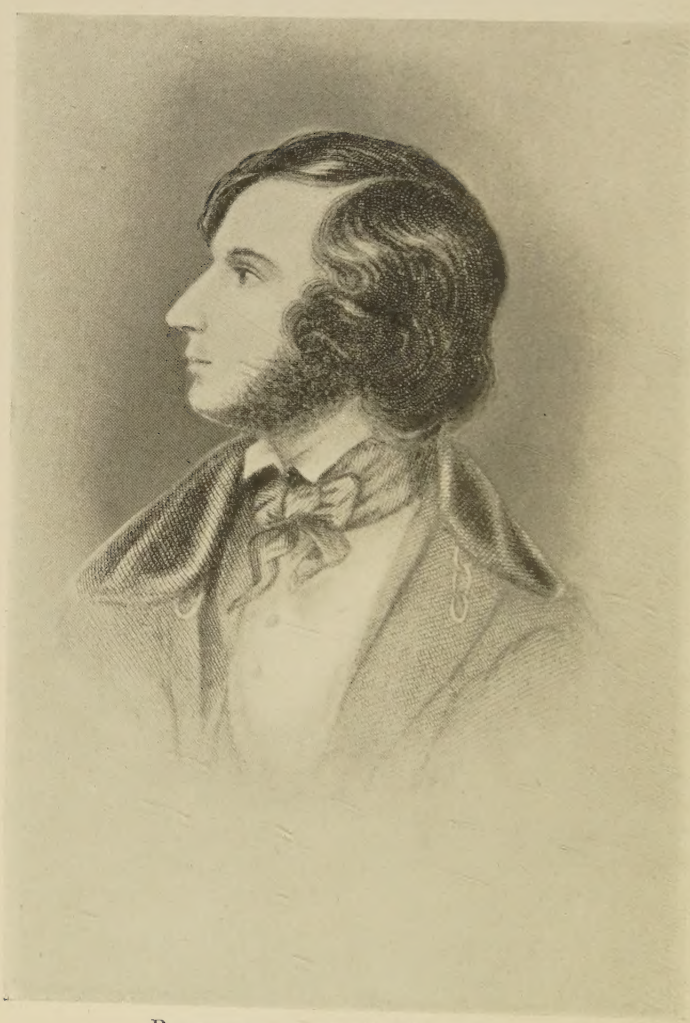

Browning at 23 (London, 1835)

Browning's England

A STUDY OF
ENGLISH INFLUENCES IN BROWNING

BY
HELEN ARCHIBALD CLARKE
Author of "*Browning's Italy*"

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To

MY COLLEAGUE IN PLEASANT LITERARY PATHS

AND

MANY YEARS FRIEND

CHARLOTTE PORTER

376

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BROWNING'S ENGLAND

BROWNING'S ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

ENGLISH POETS, FRIENDS AND ENTHUSIASMS

TO any one casually trying to recall what England has given Robert Browning by way of direct poetical inspiration, it is more than likely that the little poem about Shelley, "Memorabilia" would at once occur:

I

"Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II

"But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at —
My starting moves your laughter!

III

"I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world, no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

"For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest."

It puts into a mood and a symbol the almost worshipful admiration felt by Browning for the poet in his youth, which he had, many years before this little lyric was written, recorded in a finely appreciative passage in "Pauline."

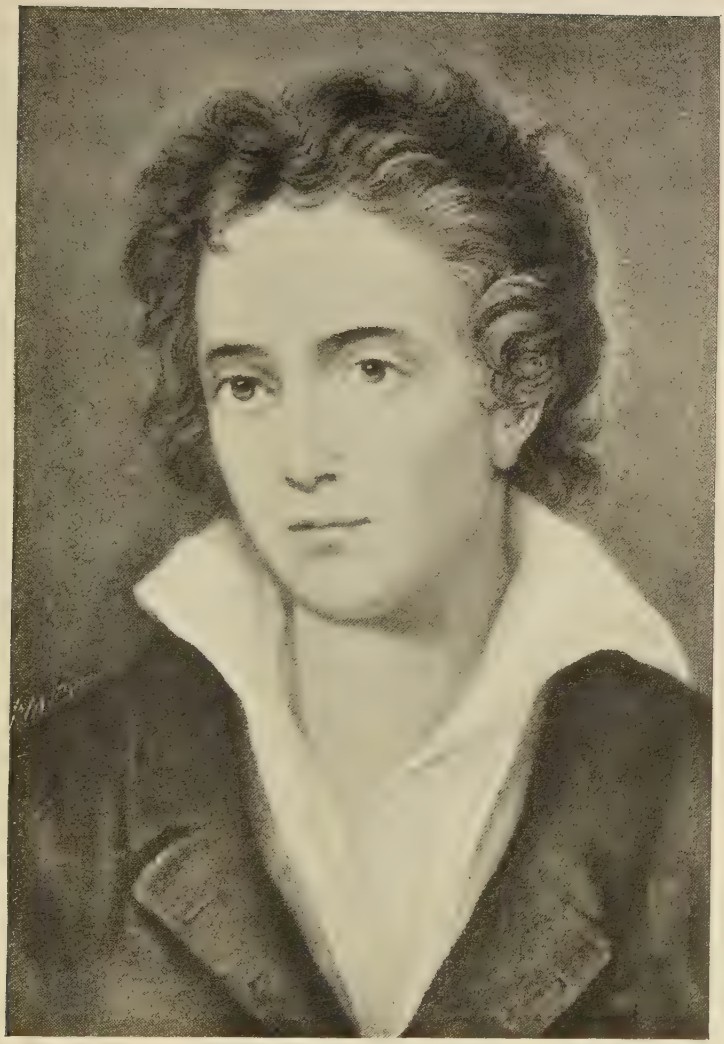
"Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever!
Thou are gone from us; years go by and spring
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
But none like thee: they stand, thy majesties,
Like mighty works which tell some spirit there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
And left us, never to return, and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.
The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
But thou art still for me as thou hast been
When I have stood with thee as on a throne
With all thy dim creations gathered round
Like mountains, and I felt of mould like them,
And with them creatures of my own were mixed,
Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.
But thou art still for me who have adored
Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name

Which I believed a spell to me alone,
Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men!
As one should worship long a sacred spring
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,
And one small tree embowers droopingly —
Joying to see some wandering insect won
To live in its few rushes, or some locust
To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air:
And then should find it but the fountain-head,
Long lost, of some great river washing towns
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live
But by its banks untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous change;
Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
Being the pulse of some great country — so
Wast thou to me, and art thou to the world!
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret
That I am not what I have been to thee:
Like a girl one has silently loved long
In her first loneliness in some retreat,
When, late emerged, all gaze and glow to view
Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which bloom
Like a mountain berry: doubtless it is sweet
To see her thus adored, but there have been
Moments when all the world was in our praise,
Sweeter than any pride of after hours.
Yet, sun-treader, all hail! From my heart's heart
I bid thee hail! E'en in my wildest dreams,
I proudly feel I would have thrown to dust

> The wreaths of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
> To see thee for a moment as thou art."

Browning was only fourteen when Shelley first came into his literary life. The story has often been told of how the young Robert, passing a bookstall one day spied in a box of second-hand volumes, a shabby little edition of Shelley advertised "Mr. Shelley's Atheistical Poems: very scarce." It seems almost incredible to us now that the name was an absolutely new one to him, and that only by questioning the bookseller did he learn that Shelley had written a number of volumes of poetry and that he was now dead. This accident was sufficient to inspire the incipient poet's curiosity, and he never rested until he was the owner of Shelley's works. They were hard to get hold of in those early days but the persistent searching of his mother finally unearthed them at Olliers' in Vere Street, London. She brought him also three volumes of Keats, who became a treasure second only to Shelley.

The question of Shelley's influence on Browning's art has been one often discussed. There are many traces of Shelleyan music and idea in his early poems "Pauline," "Paracelsus," and "Sordello," but no marked nor lasting impression was made upon Browning's development as a poet by Shelley. Upon



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

"Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever."

Browning's personal development Shelley exerted a short-lived though somewhat intense influence. We see the young enthusiast professing the atheism of his idol as the liberal views of Shelley were then interpreted, and even becoming a vegetarian. As time went on the discipleship vanished, and in its place came the recognition on Browning's part of a poetic spirit akin yet different from his own. The last trace of the disciple appears in "Sordello" when the poet addresses Shelley among the audience of dead great ones he has mustered to listen to the story of Sordello:

> — "Stay — thou, spirit, come not near
> Now — not this time desert thy cloudy place
> To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face!
> I need not fear this audience, I make free
> With them, but then this is no place for thee!
> The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown
> Up out of memories of Marathon,
> Would echo like his own sword's grinding screech
> Braying a Persian shield, — the silver speech
> Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
> Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
> The Knights to tilt, — wert thou to hear!"

Shelley appears in the work of Browning once more in the prose essay on Shelley which was written to a volume of spurious letters of that poet published in 1851. In this is summed up in a masterful paragraph

reflecting Browning's unusual penetration into the secret paths of the poetic mind, the characteristics of a poet of Shelley's order. The paragraph is as follows:

"We turn with stronger needs to the genius of an opposite tendency — the subjective poet of modern classification. He, gifted like the objective poet, with the fuller perception of nature and man, is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth, — an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul. Not what man sees, but what God sees, — the *Ideas* of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly on the Divine Hand, — it is toward these that he struggles. Not with the combination of humanity in action, but with the primal elements of humanity, he has to do; and he digs where he stands, — preferring to seek them in his own soul as the nearest reflex of that absolute Mind, according to the intuitions of which he desires to perceive and speak. Such a poet does not deal habitually with the picturesque groupings and tempestuous tossings of the forest-trees, but with their roots and fibers naked to the chalk and stone. He

does not paint pictures and hang them on the walls, but rather carries them on the retina of his own eyes: we must look deep into his human eyes, to see those pictures on them. He is rather a seer, accordingly, than a fashioner, and what he produces will be less a work than an effluence. That effluence cannot be easily considered in abstraction from his personality, — being indeed the very radiance and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated. Therefore, in our approach to the poetry, we necessarily approach the personality of the poet; in apprehending it, we apprehend him, and certainly we cannot love it without loving him. Both for love's and for understanding's sake we desire to know him, and, as readers of his poetry, must be readers of his biography too."

Finally, the little "Memorabilia" lyric gives a mood of cherished memory of the Sun-Treader, who beaconed him upon the heights in his youth, and has now become a molted eagle-feather held close to his heart.

Keats' lesser but assured place in the poet's affections comes out in the pugnacious lyric, "Popularity," one of the old-time bits of ammunition shot from the guns of those who found Browning "obscure." The poem is an "apology" for any unappreciated poet with

the true stuff in him, but the allusion to Keats shows him to have been the fuse that fired this mild explosion against the dullards who pass by unknowing and uncaring of a genius, though he pluck with one hand thoughts from the stars, and with the other fight off want.

POPULARITY

I

Stand still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us: when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!

II

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of his which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend?

III

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;

"Others give best at first, but thou
  Forever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now!"

V

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
  With few or none to watch and wonder:
I'll say — a fisher, on the sand
  By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
  Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
  And colored like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII

And each bystander of them all
  Could criticise, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
  — To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
  The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh
  As if they still the water's lisp heard
Thro' foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

Enough to furnish Solomon
  Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
  In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X

Most like the centre-spike of gold
  Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardors manifold,
  The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
  Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify, — refine to proof
  The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
  And priced and salable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
  To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII

Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats:
  Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats, —
  Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?"

JOHN KEATS

"Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?"

Wordsworth, it appears, was, so to speak, the inverse inspiration of the stirring lines "The Lost Leader." Browning's strong sympathies with the Liberal cause are here portrayed with an ardor which is fairly intoxicating poetically, but one feels it is scarcely just to the mild-eyed, exemplary Wordsworth, and perhaps exaggeratedly sure of Shakespeare's attitude on this point. It is only fair to Browning, to point out how he himself felt later that his artistic mood had here run away with him, whereupon he made amends honorable in a letter in reply to the question whether he had Wordsworth in mind: "I can only answer, with something of shame and contrition, that I undoubtedly had Wordsworth in my mind — but simply as a model; you know an artist takes one or two striking traits in the features of his 'model,' and uses them to start his fancy on a flight which may end far enough from the good man or woman who happens to be sitting for nose and eye. I thought of the great Poet's abandonment of liberalism at an unlucky juncture, and no repaying consequence that I could ever see. But, once call my fancy-portrait *Wordsworth* — and how much more ought one to say!"

The defection of Wordsworth from liberal sympathies is one of the commonplaces of

literary history. There was a time when he figured in his poetry as a patriotic leader of the people, when in clarion tones he exhorted his countrymen to "arm and combine in defense of their common birthright." But this was in the enthusiasm of his youth when he and Southey and Coleridge were metaphorically waving their red caps for the principles of the French Revolution. The unbridled actions of the French Revolutionists, quickly cooled off their ardor, and as Taine cleverly puts it, "at the end of a few years, the three, brought back into the pale of State and Church, were, Coleridge, a Pittite journalist, Wordsworth, a distributor of stamps, and Southey, poet-laureate; all converted zealots, decided Anglicans, and intolerant conservatives." The "handful of silver" for which the patriot in the poem is supposed to have left the cause included besides the post of "distributor of stamps," given to him by Lord Lonsdale in 1813, a pension of three hundred pounds a year in 1842, and the poet-laureateship in 1843.

The first of these offices was received so long after the cooling of Wordsworth's "Revolution" ardors which the events of 1793 had brought about that it can scarcely be said to have influenced his change of mind.

It was during Wordsworth's residence in France, from November 1791 to December 1792, that his enthusiasm for the French Revolution reached white heat. How the change was wrought in his feelings is shown with much penetration and sympathy by Edward Dowden in his "French Revolution and English Literature." "When war between France and England was declared Wordsworth's nature underwent the most violent strain it had ever experienced. He loved his native land yet he could wish for nothing but disaster to her arms. As the days passed he found it more and more difficult to sustain his faith in the Revolution. First, he abandoned belief in the leaders but he still trusted to the people, then the people seemed to have grown insane with the intoxication of blood. He was driven back from his defense of the Revolution, in its historical development, to a bare faith in the abstract idea. He clung to theories, the free and joyous movement of his sympathies ceased; opinions stifled the spontaneous life of the spirit, these opinions were tested and retested by the intellect, till, in the end, exhausted by inward debate, he yielded up moral questions in despair . . . by process of the understanding alone Wordsworth could attain no

vital body of truth. Rather he felt that things of far more worth than political opinions — natural instincts, sympathies, passions, intuitions — were being disintegrated or denaturalized. Wordsworth began to suspect the analytic intellect as a source of moral wisdom. In place of humanitarian dreams came a deep interest in the joys and sorrows of individual men and women; through his interest in this he was led back to a study of the mind of man and those laws which connect the work of the creative imagination with the play of the passions. He had begun again to think nobly of the world and human life." He was, in fact, a more thorough Democrat socially than any but Burns of the band of poets mentioned in Browning's gallant company, not even excepting Browning himself.

THE LOST LEADER

I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
  Just for a riband to stick in his coat —
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
  Lost all the others, she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
  So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
  Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!

We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freeman,
— He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II

We shall march prospering, — not thro' his presence
Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devil's-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him —strike gallantly,
Menace our hearts ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

Whether an artist is justified in taking the most doubtful feature of his model's physiognomy and building up from it a repellent portrait is question for debate, especially when he admits its incompleteness. But we

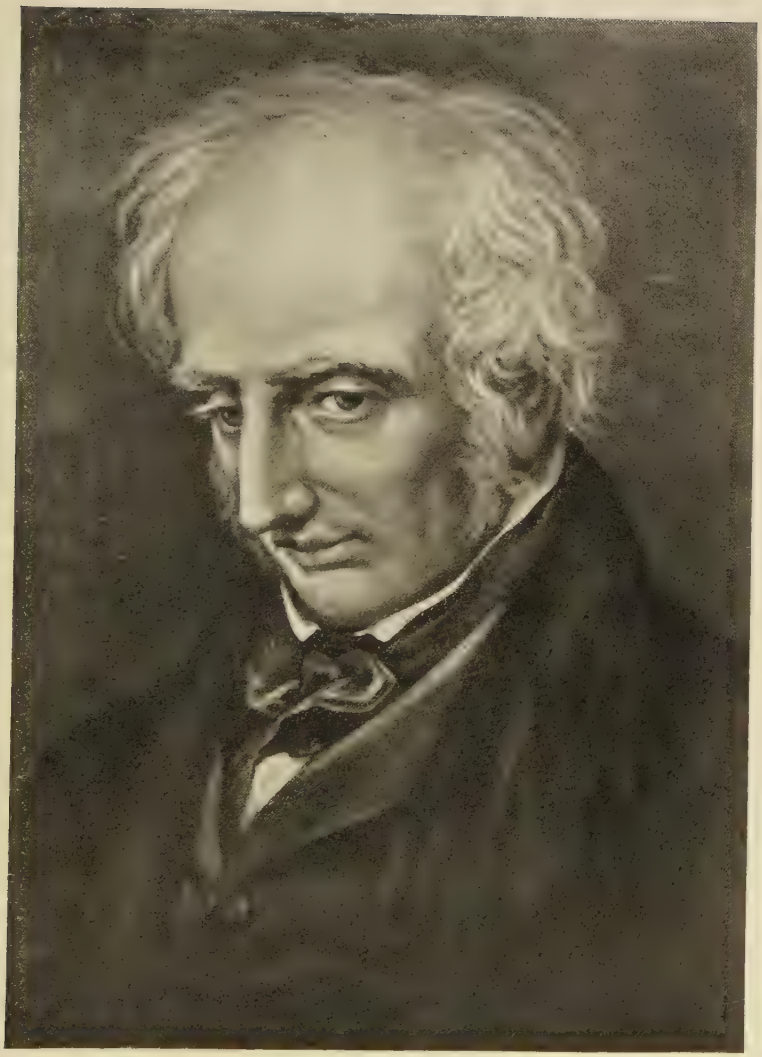
may balance against this incompleteness, the fine fire of enthusiasm for the "cause" in the poem, and the fact that Wordsworth has not been at all harmed by it. The worst that has happened is the raising in our minds of a question touching Browning's good taste.

Just here it will be interesting to speak of a bit of purely personal expression on the subject of Browning's known liberal standpoint, written by him in answer to the question propounded to a number of English men of letters and printed together with other replies in a volume edited by Andrew Reid in 1885.

"Why I am a Liberal."

"'Why?' Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be, —
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid men — each in his degree
Also God-guided — bear, and gayly too?

"But little do or can the best of us:
That little is achieved thro' Liberty.
Who then dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is 'Why.'"



William Wordsworth

"How all our copper had gone for his service.
Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proved."

Enthusiasm for liberal views comes out again and again in the poetry of Browning.

His fullest treatment of the cause of political liberty is in "Strafford," to be considered in the third chapter, but many are the hints strewn about his verse that bring home with no uncertain touch the fact that Browning lived man's "lover" and never man's "hater." Take as an example "The Englishman in Italy," where the sarcastic turn he gives to the last stanza shows clearly where his sympathies lie:

> — "Such trifles!" you say?
> Fortù, in my England at home,
> Men meet gravely to-day
> And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
> Be righteous and wise!
> — If 't were proper, Scirocco should vanish
> In black from the skies!

More the ordinary note of patriotism is struck in "Home-thoughts, from the Sea," wherein the scenes of England's victories as they come before the poet arouse pride in her military achievements.

HOME–THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

> Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-west died away;
> Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;

Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest North-east distance dawned Gibraltar grand and gray;
"Here and here did England help me: how can I help England?" — say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

In two instances Browning celebrates English friends in his poetry. The poems are "Waring" and "May and Death."

Waring, who stands for Alfred Domett, is an interesting figure in Colonial history as well as a minor light among poets. But it is highly probable that he would not have been put into verse by Browning any more than many other of the poet's warm friends if it had not been for the incident described in the poem which actually took place, and made a strong enough impression to inspire a creative if not exactly an exalted mood on Browning's part. The incident is recorded in Thomas Powell's "Living Authors of England," who writes of Domett, "We have a vivid recollection of the last time we saw him. It was at an evening party a few days before he sailed from England; his intimate friend, Mr. Browning, was also present. It happened that the latter was introduced that evening for the first time to a young author

who had just then appeared in the literary world [Powell, himself]. This, consequently, prevented the two friends from conversation, and they parted from each other without the slightest idea on Mr. Browning's part that he was seeing his old friend Domett for the last time. Some days after when he found that Domett had sailed, he expressed in strong terms to the writer of this sketch the self-reproach he felt at having preferred the conversation of a stranger to that of his old associate."

This happened in 1842, when with no good-bys, Domett sailed for New Zealand where he lived for thirty years, and held during that time many important official posts. Upon his return to England, Browning and he met again, and in his poem "Ranolf and Amohia," published the year after, he wrote the often quoted line so aptly appreciative of Browning's genius, — "Subtlest assertor of the soul in song."

The poem belongs to the *vers de société* order, albeit the lightness is of a somewhat ponderous variety. It, however, has much interest as a character sketch from the life, and is said by those who had the opportunity of knowing to be a capital portrait.

WARING

I

I

What's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

II

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward? — little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf —
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay!

III

He was prouder than the devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay and many other meetings,

Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
Stray-leaves, fragments, blurrs and blottings,
Certain first steps were achieved
Already which" — (is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
Hedgeside chance-glades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit —
His cheeks' raised color, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.

Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.
E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavor
And goodness unrepaid as ever;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
Telling aught but honest truth to?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
No! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

V

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I'd say, "to only have conceived,
Planned your great works, apart from progress,
Surpasses little works achieved!"

Rydal Mount, the Home of Wordsworth

I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child!
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humors license, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough

Cold northern natures born perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
Amid their barbarous twitter!
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
That we and Waring meet again
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favor yet, to pity won

By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers, —
"Give me my so-long promised son,
Let Waring end what I begun!"
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so —
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh Waring, what's to really be?

A clear stage and a crowd to see!
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius — am I right? — shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!
Some one shall somehow run a muck
With this old world for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names! — but 'tis, somehow,
As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best!

II

I

"When I last saw Waring . . . "
(How all turned to him who spoke!
You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel or sea-faring?)

II

"We were sailing by Triest
Where a day or two we harbored:
A sunset was in the West,
When, looking over the vessel's side,

One of our company espied
A sudden speck to larboard.
And as a sea-duck flies and swims
At once, so came the light craft up,
With its sole lateen sail that trims
And turns (the water round its rims
Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
And by us like a fish it curled,
And drew itself up close beside,
Its great sail on the instant furled,
And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
A pilot for you to Triest?
Without one, look you ne'er so big,
They'll never let you up the bay!
We natives should know best.'
I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
And one, half-hidden by his side
Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
With great grass hat and kerchief black,
Who looked up with his kingly throat,
Said somewhat, while the other shook
His hair back from his eyes to look
Their longest at us; then the boat,
I know not how, turned sharply round,
Laying her whole side on the sea
As a leaping fish does; from the lee

Into the weather, cut somehow
Her sparkling path beneath our bow,
And so went off, as with a bound,
Into the rosy and golden half
O' the sky, to overtake the sun
And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
Its singing cave; yet I caught one
Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
And neither time nor toil could mar
Those features: so I saw the last
Of Waring!" — You? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar!
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

"May and Death" is perhaps more interesting for the glimpse it gives of Browning's appreciation of English Nature than for its expression of grief for the death of a friend.

MAY AND DEATH

I

I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

III

So, for their sake, be May still May!
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me: I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

IV

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between, —

V

That, they might spare; a certain wood
Might miss the plant; their loss were small:
But I, — whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

The poet's one truly enthusiastic outburst in connection with English Nature he sings out in his longing for an English spring in the incomparable little lyric "Home-thoughts, from Abroad."

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

I

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,

That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England — now!

II

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge —
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And, though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
— Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

After this it seems hardly possible that Browning, himself speaks in "De Gustibus," yet long and happy living away from England doubtless dimmed his sense of the beauty of English landscape. "De Gustibus" was published ten years later than "Home-Thoughts from Abroad," when Italy and he had indeed become "lovers old." A deeper reason than mere delight in its scenery is also reflected in the poem; the sympathy shared with Mrs. Browning, for the cause of Italian independence.

"DE GUSTIBUS——"

I

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say, —
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the bean-flower's boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands) —
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree — 'tis a cypress — stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque

Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day — the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
— She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me —
(When fortune's malice
Lost her — Calais) —
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be!

Two or three English artists called forth appreciation in verse from Browning. There is the exquisite bit called "Deaf and Dumb," after a group of statuary by Woolner, of Constance and Arthur — the deaf and dumb children of Sir Thomas Fairbairn.

DEAF AND DUMB

A GROUP BY WOOLNER.

Only the prism's obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white;
So may a glory from defect arise:

An English Lane

Only by Deafness may the vexed Love wreak
Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
Only by Dumbness adequately speak
As favored mouth could never, through the eyes.

There is also the beautiful description in "Balaustion's Adventure" of the Alkestis by Sir Frederick Leighton.

The flagrant anachronism of making a Greek girl at the time of the Fall of Athens describe an English picture cannot but be forgiven, since the artistic effect gained is so fine. The poet quite convinces the reader that Sir Frederick Leighton ought to have been a Kaunian painter, if he was not, and that Balaustion or no one was qualified to appreciate his picture at its full worth.

"I know, too, a great Kaunian painter, strong
As Herakles, though rosy with a robe
Of grace that softens down the sinewy strength:
And he has made a picture of it all.
There lies Alkestis dead, beneath the sun,
She longed to look her last upon, beside
The sea, which somehow tempts the life in us
To come trip over its white waste of waves,
And try escape from earth, and fleet as free.
Behind the body, I suppose there bends
Old Pheres in his hoary impotence;
And women-wailers, in a corner crouch
— Four, beautiful as you four — yes, indeed! —
Close, each to other, agonizing all,

As fastened, in fear's rhythmic sympathy,
To two contending opposite. There strains
The might o' the hero 'gainst his more than match,
— Death, dreadful not in thew and bone, but like
The envenomed substance that exudes some dew
Whereby the merely honest flesh and blood
Will fester up and run to ruin straight,
Ere they can close with, clasp and overcome
The poisonous impalpability
That simulates a form beneath the flow
Of those grey garments; I pronounce that piece
Worthy to set up in our Poikilé!

"And all came, — glory of the golden verse,
And passion of the picture, and that fine
Frank outgush of the human gratitude
Which saved our ship and me, in Syracuse, —
Ay, and the tear or two which slipt perhaps
Away from you, friends, while I told my tale,
— It all came of this play that gained no prize!
Why crown whom Zeus has crowned in soul before?"

Once before had Sir Frederick Leighton inspired the poet in the exquisite lines on Eurydice.

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON

But give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
Let them once more absorb me! One look now
Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond:

Hold me but safe again within the bond
Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
Defied, — no past is mine, no future: look at me!

Beautiful as these lines are, they do not impress me as fully interpreting Leighton's picture. The expression of Eurydice is rather one of unthinking confiding affection — as if she were really unconscious or ignorant of the danger; while that of Orpheus is one of passionate agony as he tries to hold her off.

Though English art could not fascinate the poet as Italian art did, for the fully sufficient reason that it does not stand for a great epoch of intellectual awakening, yet with what fair alchemy he has touched those few artists he has chosen to honor. Notwithstanding his avowed devotion to Italy, expressed in "De Gustibus," one cannot help feeling that in the poems mentioned in this chapter, there is that ecstasy of sympathy which goes only to the most potent influences in the formation of character. Something of what I mean is expressed in one of his latest poems, "Development." In this we certainly get a real peep at young Robert Browning, led by his wise father into the delights of Homer, by slow degrees, where all is truth at first, to

end up with the devastating criticism of Wolf. In spite of it all the dream stays and is the reality. Nothing can obliterate the magic of a strong early enthusiasm, as "fact still held" "Spite of new Knowledge," in his "heart of hearts."

DEVELOPMENT

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.
When I was five years old, I asked him once
"What do you read about?"
"The siege of Troy."
"What is a siege and what is Troy?"
Whereat
He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
— Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close
Under the footstool, being cowardly,
But whom — since she was worth the pains, poor puss —
Towzer and Tray, — our dogs, the Atreidai, — sought
By taking Troy to get possession of
— Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,
(My pony in the stable) — forth would prance
And put to flight Hector — our page-boy's self.
This taught me who was who and what was what:
So far I rightly understood the case
At five years old: a huge delight it proved
And still proves — thanks to that instructor sage
My Father, who knew better than turn straight
Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,
Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-blind,
Content with darkness and vacuity.

It happened, two or three years afterward,
That — I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege —
My Father came upon our make-believe.
"How would you like to read yourself the tale
Properly told, of which I gave you first
Merely such notion as a boy could bear?
Pope, now, would give you the precise account
Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,
You'll hear — who knows? — from Homer's very mouth.
Learn Greek by all means, read the 'Blind Old Man,
Sweetest of Singers' — *tuphlos* which means 'blind,'
Hedistos which means 'sweetest.' Time enough!
Try, anyhow, to master him some day;
Until when, take what serves for substitute,
Read Pope, by all means!"
So I ran through Pope,
Enjoyed the tale — what history so true?
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,
Grew fitter thus for what was promised next —
The very thing itself, the actual words,
When I could turn — say, Buttmann to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine day,
"Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?
There's Heine, where the big books block the shelf:
Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!"

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned
Who was who, what was what, from Homer's tongue,
And there an end of learning. Had you asked
The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,
"Who was it wrote the Iliad?" — what a laugh!
"Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life
Doubtless some facts exist: it's everywhere:

We have not settled, though, his place of birth:
He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:
Seven cites claimed him — Scio, with best right,
Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns we have.
Then there's the 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice,'
That's all — unless they dig 'Margites' up
(I'd like that) nothing more remains to know."

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;
Until — "What's this the Germans say is fact
That Wolf found out first? It's unpleasant work
Their chop and change, unsettling one's belief:
All the same, while we live, we learn, that's sure."
So, I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena.*
And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like
Proved there was never any Troy at all,
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged, — nay, worse, —
No actual Homer, no authentic text,
No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,
Had treasured in my heart and soul so long —
Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,
Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts
And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and fixed
From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.
Assuredly thenceforward — thank my stars! —
However it got there, deprive who could —
Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry,
Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,
Achilles and his Friend? — though Wolf — ah, Wolf!
Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?

But then "No dream's worth waking" — Browning says:
And here's the reason why I tell thus much
I, now mature man, you anticipate,

May blame my Father justifiably
For letting me dream out my nonage thus,
And only by such slow and sure degrees
Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,
Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.
Why did he ever let me dream at all,
Not bid me taste the story in its strength?
Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified
To rightly understand mythology,
Silence at least was in his power to keep:
I might have — somehow — correspondingly —
Well, who knows by what method, gained my gains,
Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,
My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus's son,
A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,
Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.
Could not I have excogitated this
Without believing such men really were?
That is — he might have put into my hand
The "Ethics"? In translation, if you please,
Exact, no pretty lying that improves,
To suit the modern taste: no more, no less —
The "Ethics": 'tis a treatise I find hard
To read aright now that my hair is grey,
And I can manage the original.
At five years old — how ill had fared its leaves!
Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,
Nor crumple, dogsear and deface — boys' way.

This chapter would not be complete without Browning's tribute to dog Tray, whose traits may not be peculiar to English dogs

but whose name is proverbially English. Besides it touches a subject upon which the poet had strong feelings. Vivisection he abhorred, and in the controversies which were tearing the scientific and philanthropic world asunder in the last years of his life, no one was a more determined opponent of vivisection than he.

TRAY

Sing me a hero! Quench my thirst
Of soul, ye bards!
Quoth Bard the first:
"Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don
His helm and eke his habergeon . . . "
Sir Olaf and his bard ——!

"That sin-scathed brow" (quoth Bard the second),
"That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned
My hero to some steep, beneath
Which precipice smiled tempting death . . . "
You too without your host have reckoned!

"A beggar-child" (let's hear this third!)
"Sat on a quay's edge: like a bird
Sang to herself at careless play,
'And fell into the stream. Dismay!
Help, you the standers-by!' None stirred.

"Bystanders reason, think of wives
And children ere they risk their lives.
Over the balustrade has bounced
A mere instinctive dog, and pounced
Plumb on the prize. 'How well he dives!

"'Up he comes with the child, see, tight
In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite
A depth of ten feet — twelve, I bet!
Good dog! What, off again? There's yet
Another child to save? All right!

"'How strange we saw no other fall!
It's instinct in the animal.
Good dog! But he's a long while under:
If he got drowned I should not wonder —
Strong current, that against the wall!

"'Here he comes, holds in mouth this time
— What may the thing be? Well, that's prime!
Now, did you ever? Reason reigns
In man alone, since all Tray's pains
Have fished — the child's doll from the slime!'

"And so, amid the laughter gay,
Trotted my hero off, — old Tray, —
Till somebody, prerogatived
With reason, reasoned: 'Why he dived,
His brain would show us, I should say.

"'John, go and catch — or, if needs be,
Purchase — that animal for me!
By vivisection, at expense
Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,
How brain secretes dog's soul, we'll see!'"

CHAPTER II

SHAKESPEARE'S PORTRAIT

ONCE and once only did Browning depart from his custom of choosing people of minor note to figure in his dramatic monologues. In "At the 'Mermaid'" he ventures upon the consecrated ground of a heart-to-heart talk between Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and the wits who gathered at the classic "Mermaid" Tavern in Cheapside, following this up with further glimpses into the inner recesses of Shakespeare's mind in the monologues "House" and "Shop." It is a particularly daring feat in the case of Shakespeare, for as all the world knows any attempt at getting in touch with the real man, Shakespeare, must, per force, be woven out of such "stuff as dreams are made on."

In interpreting this portraiture of one great poet by another it will be of interest to glance at the actual facts as far as they are known in regard to the relations which existed between Shakespeare and Jonson. Praise and blame both are recorded on Jon-

son's part when writing of Shakespeare, yet the praise shows such undisguised admiration that the blame sinks into insignificance. Jonson's "learned socks" to which Milton refers probably tripped the critic up occasionally by reason of their weight.

There is a charming story told of the friendship between the two men recorded by Sir Nicholas L'Estrange, within a very few years of Shakespeare's death, who attributed it to Dr. Donne. The story goes that "Shakespeare was godfather to one of Ben Jonson's children, and after the christening, being in a deep study, Jonson came to cheer him up and asked him why he was so melancholy. 'No, faith, Ben,' says he, 'not I, but I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my godchild, and I have resolved at last.' 'I prythee what?' says he. 'I'faith, Ben, I'll e'en give him a dozen good Lattin spoons, and thou shalt translate them.'" If this must be taken with a grain of salt, there is another even more to the honor of Shakespeare reported by Rowe and considered credible by such Shakespearian scholars as Halliwell Phillipps and Sidney Lee. "His acquaintance with Ben Jonson" writes Rowe, "began with a remarkable piece of humanity

and good nature; Mr. Jonson, who was at that time altogether unknown to the world, had offered one of his plays to the players in order to have it acted, and the persons into whose hands it was put, after having turned it carelessly and superciliously over, were just upon returning it to him with an ill-natured answer that it would be of no service to their company, when Shakespeare luckily cast his eye upon it, and found something so well in it as to engage him first to read it through, and afterwards to recommend Mr. Jonson and his writings to the public." The play in question was the famous comedy of "Every Man in His Humour," which was brought out in September, 1598, by the Lord Chamberlain's company, Shakespeare himself being one of the leading actors upon the occasion.

Authentic history records a theater war in which Jonson and Shakespeare figured, on opposite sides, but if allusions in Jonson's play the "Poetaster" have been properly interpreted, their friendly relations were not deeply disturbed. The trouble began in the first place by the London of 1600 suddenly rushing into a fad for the company of boy players, recruited chiefly from the choristers of the Chapel Royal, and known as the "Chil-

dren of the Chapel." They had been acting at the new theater in Blackfriars since 1597, and their vogue became so great as actually to threaten Shakespeare's company and other companies of adult actors. Just at this time Ben Jonson was having a personal quarrel with his fellow dramatists, Marston and Dekker, and as he received little sympathy from the actors, he took his revenge by joining his forces with those of the Children of the Chapel. They brought out for him in 1600 his satire of "Cynthia's Revels," in which he held up to ridicule Marston, Dekker and their friends the actors. Marston and Dekker, with the actors of Shakespeare's company, prepared to retaliate, but Jonson hearing of it forestalled them with his play the "Poetaster" in which he spared neither dramatists nor actors. Shakespeare's company continued the fray by bringing out at the Globe Theatre, in the following year, Dekker and Marston's "Satiro-Mastix, or The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet," and as Ward remarks, "the quarrel had now become too hot to last." The excitement, however, continued for sometime, theatergoers took sides and watched with interest "the actors and dramatists' boisterous war of personalities," to quote Mr. Lee, who

goes on to point out that on May 10, 1601, the Privy Council called the attention of the Middlesex magistrates to the abuse covertly leveled by the actors of the "Curtain" at gentlemen "of good desert and quality," and directed the magistrates to examine all plays before they were produced.

Jonson, himself, finally made apologies in verses appended to printed copies of the "Poetaster."

"Now for the players 'tis true I tax'd them
And yet but some, and those so sparingly
As all the rest might have sat still unquestioned,
Had they but had the wit or conscience
To think well of themselves. But impotent they
Thought each man's vice belonged to their whole tribe;
And much good do it them. What they have done against me
I am not moved with, if it gave them meat
Or got them clothes, 'tis well: that was their end,
Only amongst them I was sorry for
Some better natures by the rest so drawn
To run in that vile line."

Sidney Lee cleverly deduces Shakespeare's attitude in the quarrel in allusions to it in "Hamlet," wherein he "protested against the abusive comments on the men-actors of 'the common' stages or public theaters which were put into the children's mouths. Rosencrantz declared that the children 'so berattle

[*i.e.* assail] the common stages — so they call them — that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither [*i.e.* to the public theaters].' Hamlet in pursuit of the theme pointed out that the writers who encouraged the vogue of the 'child actors' did them a poor service, because when the boys should reach men's estate they would run the risk, if they continued on the stage, of the same insults and neglect which now threatened their seniors.

"'*Hamlet.* What are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escorted [*i.e.* paid]? Will they pursue the quality [*i.e.* the actor's profession] no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players — as it is most like, if their means are no better — their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?

"'*Rosencrantz.* Faith, there has been much to do on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tarre [*i.e.* incite] them to controversy; there was for a while no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.'"

This certainly does not reflect a very belligerent attitude since it merely puts in a word for the grown-up actors rather than

casting any slurs upon the children. Further indications of Shakespeare's mildness in regard to the whole matter are given in the Prologue to "Troylus and Cressida," where, as Mr. Lee says, he made specific reference to the strife between Ben Jonson and the players in the lines

> "And hither am I come
> A Prologue arm'd, but not in confidence,
> Of Authors' pen, or Actors' voyce."

The most interesting bit of evidence to show that Shakespeare and Jonson remained friends, even in the heat of the conflict, may be gained from the "Poetaster" itself if we admit that the Virgil of the play, who is chosen peacemaker stands for Shakespeare; and who so fit to be peacemaker as Shakespeare for his amiable qualities seem to have impressed themselves upon all who knew him.

Following Mr. Lee's lead, "Jonson figures personally in the 'Poetaster' under the name of Horace. Episodically Horace and his friends, Tibullus and Gallus, eulogize the work and genius of another character, Virgil, in terms so closely resembling those which Jonson is known to have applied to Shakespeare that they may be regarded as intended to apply to him (Act v, Scene 1). Jonson points

out that Virgil, by his penetrating intuition, achieved the great effects which others laboriously sought to reach through rules of art.

> 'His learning labors not the school-like gloss
> That most consists of echoing words and terms . . .
> Nor any long or far-fetched circumstance —
> Wrapt in the curious generalities of arts —
> But a direct and analytic sum
> Of all the worth and first effects of art.
> And for his poesy, 'tis so rammed with life
> That it shall gather strength of life with being,
> And live hereafter, more admired than now.'

Tibullus gives Virgil equal credit for having in his writings touched with telling truth upon every vicissitude of human existence:

> 'That which he hath writ
> Is with such judgment labored and distilled
> Through all the needful uses of our lives
> That, could a man remember but his lines,
> He should not touch at any serious point
> But he might breathe his spirit out of him.'

"Finally, Virgil in the play is nominated by Cæsar to act as judge between Horace and his libellers, and he advises the administration of purging pills to the offenders."

This neat little chain of evidence would have no weak link, if it were not for a passage in the play, "The Return from Parnassus,"

acted by the students in St. John's College the same year, 1601. In this there is a dialogue between Shakespeare's fellow-actors, Burbage and Kempe. Speaking of the University dramatists, Kempe says:

"Why here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down; aye, and Ben Jonson, too. O! that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow. He brought up Horace, giving the poets a pill; but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit." Burbage continues, "He is a shrewd fellow indeed." This has, of course, been taken to mean that Shakespeare was actively against Jonson in the Dramatists' and Actors' war. But as everything else points, as we have seen, to the contrary, one accepts gladly the loophole of escape offered by Mr. Lee. "The words quoted from 'The Return from Parnassus' hardly admit of a literal interpretation. Probably the 'purge' that Shakespeare was alleged by the author of 'The Return from Parnassus' to have given Jonson meant no more than that Shakespeare had signally outstripped Jonson in popular esteem." That this was an actual fact is proved by the lines of Leonard Digges, an admiring contemporary of Shakespeare's, printed in the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's poems, com-

paring "Julius Cæsar" and Jonson's play "Cataline:"

> "So have I seen when Cæsar would appear,
> And on the stage at half-sword parley were
> Brutus and Cassius — oh, how the audience
> Were ravish'd, with what wonder they went thence;
> When some new day they would not brook a line
> Of tedious, though well-labored, Cataline."

This reminds one of the famous witticism attributed to Eudymion Porter that "Shakespeare was sent from Heaven and Ben from College."

If Jonson's criticisms of Shakespeare's work were sometime not wholly appreciative, the fact may be set down to the distinction between the two here so humorously indicated. "A Winter's Tale" and the "Tempest" both called forth some sarcasms from Jonson, the first for its error about the Coast of Bohemia which Shakespeare borrowed from Greene. Jonson wrote in the Induction to "Bartholemew Fair;" "If there be never a servant-monster in the Fair, who can help it he says? Nor a nest of Antics. He is loth to make nature afraid in his plays like those that beget Tales, Tempests, and such like Drolleries." The allusions here are very evidently to Caliban and the satyrs who figure in

the sheep-shearing feast in "A Winter's Tale." The worst blast of all, however, occurs in Jonson's "Timber," but the blows are evidently given with a loving hand. He writes "I remember, the players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare that, in his writing, whatsoever he penn'd, hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, would he had blotted a thousand; — which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted; and to justifie mine owne candor, — for I lov'd the man, and doe honor his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. Hee was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasie; brave notions and gentle expressions; wherein hee flow'd with that facility that sometime it was necessary he should be stop'd; — *sufflaminandus erat*, as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his owne power; — would the rule of it had beene so too! Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter; as when he said in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him, — Cæsar thou dost me wrong; hee replyed, — Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause; and such like; which were

ridiculous. But hee redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praysed then to be pardoned."

And even this criticism is altogether controverted by the wholly eulogistic lines Jonson wrote for the First Folio edition of Shakespeare printed in 1623, "To the memory of my beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare and what he hath left us." [1]

For the same edition he also wrote the following lines for the portrait reproduced in this volume, which it is safe to regard as the Shakespeare Ben Jonson remembered:

"TO THE READER

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Graver had a strife
With Nature, to out-doo the life:
O, could he but have drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he hath hit
His face; the Print would then surpasse
All, that was ever writ in brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

B. I."

Shakespeare's talk in "At the Mermaid" grows out of the supposition, not touched upon

[1] See the Tempest volume in First Folio Shakespeare. (Crowell & Co.)

until the very last line that Ben Jonson had been calling him "Next Poet," a supposition quite justifiable in the light of Ben's praises of him. The poem also reflects the love and admiration in which Shakespeare the man was held by all who have left any record of their impressions of him. As for the portraiture of the poet's attitude of mind, it is deduced indirectly from his work. That he did not desire to become "Next Poet" may be argued from the fact that after his first outburst of poem and sonnet writing in the manner of the poets of the age, he gave up the career of gentleman-poet to devote himself wholly to the more independent if not so socially distinguished one of actor-playwright. "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" were the only poems of his published under his supervision and the only works with the dedication to a patron such as it was customary to write at that time.

I have before me as I write the recent Clarendon Press fac-similes of "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece," published respectively in 1593 and 1594, — beautiful little quartos with exquisitely artistic designs in the title-pages, headpieces and initials; altogether worthy of a poet who might have designs upon Fame. The dedication to the first reads: —

"TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
Henry Wriothesley, Earle of Southampton
and Baron of Litchfield

Right Honourable, I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolisht lines to your Lordship, nor how the worlde will censure mee for choosing so strong a proppe to support so weake a burthen, onelye if your Honour seeme but pleased, I account my selfe highly praised, and vowe to take advantage of all idle houres, till I have honoured you with some great labour. But if the first heire of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorie it had so noble a god-father: and never after eare so barren a land, for feare it yield me still so bad a harvest, I leave it to your Honourable Survey, and your Honor to your hearts content, which I wish may alwaies answere your owne wish, and the worlds hopeful expectation.

Your Honors in all dutie
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE."

The second reads: —

"TO THE RIGHT
HONORABLE, HENRY
Wriothesley, Earle of Southampton
and Baron of Litchfield

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end: wherof this Pamphlet without be-

ginning is a superfluous Moiety. The warrant I have of your Honourable disposition, nor the worth of my untutored Lines makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to doe is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duety would shew greater, meane time, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship; To whom I wish long life still lengthened with all happinesse.

Your Lordships in all duety.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE."

No more after this does Shakespeare appear in the light of a poet with a patron. Even the sonnets, some of which evidently celebrate Southampton, were issued by a piratical publisher without Shakespeare's consent, while his plays found their way into print at the hands of other pirates who cribbed them from stage copies.

Such hints as these have been worked up by Browning into a consistent characterization of a man who regards himself as having foregone his chances of laureateship or "Next Poet" by devoting himself to a form of literary art which would not appeal to the powers that be as fitting him for any such position. Such honors he claims do not go to

the dramatic poet, who has never allowed the world to slip inside his breast, but has simply portrayed the joy and the sorrow of life as he saw it around him, and with an art which turns even sorrow into beauty.—"Do I stoop? I pluck a posy, do I stand and stare? all's blue;" — but to the subjective, introspective poet, out of tune with himself and with the universe. The allusions Shakespeare makes to the last "King" are not very definite, but, on the whole, they fit Edmund Spenser, whose poems from first to last are dedicated to people of distinction in court circles. His work, moreover, is full of wailing and woe in various keys, and also full of self-revelation. He allowed the world to slip inside his breast upon almost every occasion, and perhaps he may be said to have bought "his laurel," for it was no doubt extremely gratifying to Queen Elizabeth to see herself in the guise of the Faerie Queene, and even his dedication of the "Faerie Queene" to her, used as she was to flattery, must have been as music in her ears. "To the most high, mightie, and magnificent Empresse, renouned for piety, vertue, and all gratious government, Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, Queene of England, Frahnce, and Ireland and of Virginia. Defender of the Faith, & c. Her most humble servant Edmund

Spenser doth in all humilitie, Dedicate, present, and consecrate These his labours, To live with the eternity of her Fame." The next year Spenser received a pension from the crown of fifty pounds per annum.

It is a careful touch on Browning's part to use the phrase "Next Poet," for the "laureateship" at that time was not a recognized official position. The term, "laureate," seems to have been used to designate poets who had attained fame and Royal favor, since Nash speaks of Spenser in his "Supplication of Piers Pennilesse" the same year the "Faerie Queene" was published as next laureate.

The first really officially appointed Poet Laureate was Ben Jonson, himself, who in either 1616 or 1619 received the post from James I., later ratified by Charles I., who increased the annuity to one hundred pounds a year and a butt of wine from the King's cellars.

Probably the allusion "Your Pilgrim" in the twelfth stanza of "At the Mermaid" is to "The Return from Parnassus" in which the pilgrims to Parnassus who figure in an earlier play "The Pilgrimage to Parnassus" discover the world to be about as dismal a place as it is described in this stanza.

At first sight it might seem that the position

taken by Shakespeare in the poem is almost too modest, yet upon second thoughts it will be remembered that though Shakespeare had a tremendous following among the people, attested by the frequency with which his plays were acted; that though there are instances of his being highly appreciated by contemporaries of importance; that though his plays were given before the Queen, he did not have the universal acceptance among learned and court circles which was accorded to Spenser.

It is quite fitting that the scene should be set in the "Mermaid." No record exists to show that Shakespeare was ever there, it is true, but the "Mermaid" was a favorite haunt of Ben Jonson and his circle of wits, whose meetings there were immortalized by Beaumont in his poetical letter to Jonson: —

> "What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid? heard words that have been
> So nimble and so full of subtle flame,
> As if that every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life."

Add to this what Fuller wrote in his "Worthies," 1662, "Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson, which

two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention," and there is sufficient poetic warrant for the "Mermaid" setting.

The final touch is given in the hint that all the time Shakespeare is aware of his own greatness, perhaps to be recognized by a future age.

Let Browning, himself, now show what he has done with the material.

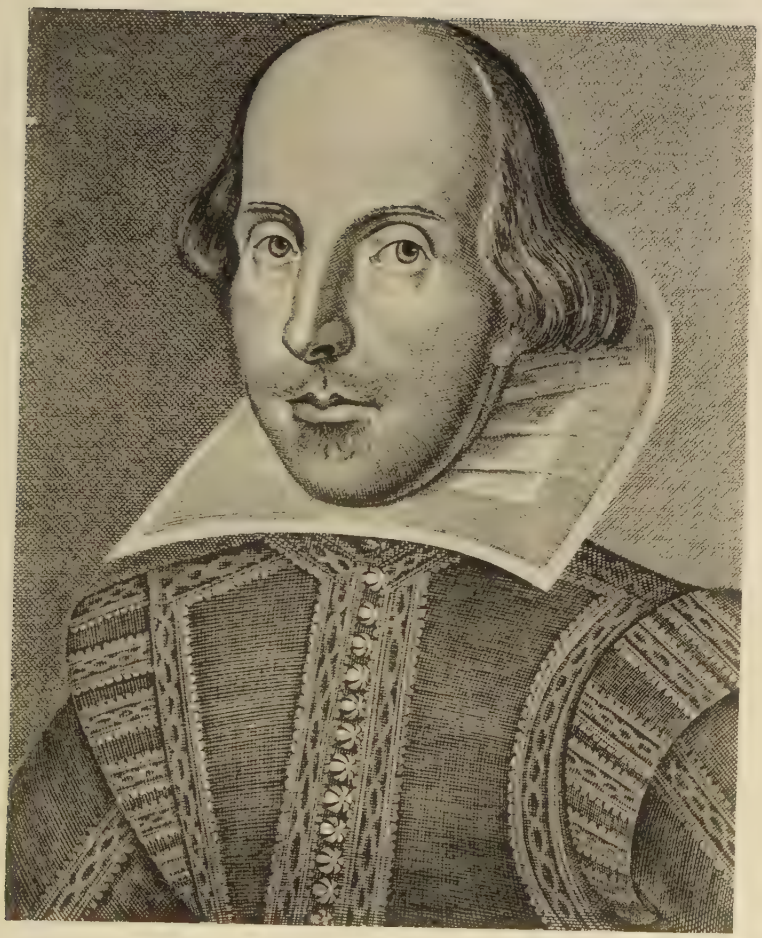
AT THE "MERMAID"

The figure that thou here seest . . . Tut!
Was it for gentle Shakespeare put?

B. Jonson. (*Adapted.*)

I

I — "Next Poet?" No, my hearties,
I nor am nor fain would be!
Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,
Not one soul revolt to me!
I, forsooth, sow song-sedition?
I, a schism in verse provoke?
I, blown up by bard's ambition,
Burst — your bubble-king? You joke.



First Folio Portrait of Shakespeare

"Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
Do I stand and stare? All's blue."

II

Come, be grave! The sherris mantling
Still about each mouth, mayhap,
Breeds you insight — just a scantling —
Brings me truth out — just a scrap.
Look and tell me! Written, spoken,
Here's my life-long work: and where
— Where's your warrant or my token
I'm the dead king's son and heir?

III

Here's my work: does work discover —
What was rest from work — my life?
Did I live man's hater, lover?
Leave the world at peace, at strife?
Call earth ugliness or beauty?
See things there in large or small?
Use to pay its Lord my duty?
Use to own a lord at all?

IV

Blank of such a record, truly
Here's the work I hand, this scroll,
Yours to take or leave; as duly,
Mine remains the unproffered soul.
So much, no whit more, my debtors —
How should one like me lay claim
To that largess elders, betters
Sell you cheap their souls for — fame?

V

Which of you did I enable
Once to slip inside my breast,

There to catalogue and label
What I like least, what love best,
Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
Seek and shun, respect — deride?
Who has right to make a rout of
Rarities he found inside?

VI

Rarities or, as he'd rather,
Rubbish such as stocks his own:
Need and greed (O strange) the Father
Fashioned not for him alone!
Whence — the comfort set a-strutting,
Whence — the outcry "Haste, behold!
Bard's breast open wide, past shutting,
Shows what brass we took for gold!"

VII

Friends, I doubt not he'd display you
Brass — myself call orichalc, —
Furnish much amusement; pray you
Therefore, be content I balk
Him and you, and bar my portal!
Here's my work outside: opine
What's inside me mean and mortal!
Take your pleasure, leave me mine!

VIII

Which is — not to buy your laurel
As last king did, nothing loth.
Tale adorned and pointed moral
Gained him praise and pity both.

Out rushed sighs and groans by dozens,
  Forth by scores oaths, curses flew:
Proving you were cater-cousins,
  Kith and kindred, king and you!

IX

Whereas do I ne'er so little
  (Thanks to sherris) leave ajar
Bosom's gate — no jot nor tittle
  Grow we nearer than we are.
Sinning, sorrowing, despairing,
  Body-ruined, spirit-wrecked, —
Should I give my woes an airing, —
  Where's one plague that claims respect?

X

Have you found your life distasteful?
  My life did, and does, smack sweet.
Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?
  Mine I saved and hold complete.
Do your joys with age diminish?
  When mine fail me, I'll complain.
Must in death your daylight finish?
  My sun sets to rise again.

XI

What, like you, he proved — your Pilgrim —
  This our world a wilderness,
Earth still grey and heaven still grim,
  Not a hand there his might press,
Not a heart his own might throb to,
  Men all rogues and women — say,
Dolls which boys' heads duck and bob to,
  Grown folk drop or throw away?

XII

My experience being other,
How should I contribute verse
Worthy of your king and brother?
Balaam-like I bless, not curse.
I find earth not grey but rosy,
Heaven not grim but fair of hue.
Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
Do I stand and stare? All's blue.

XIII

Doubtless I am pushed and shoved by
Rogues and fools enough: the more
Good luck mine, I love, am loved by
Some few honest to the core.
Scan the near high, scout the far low!
"But the low come close:" what then?
Simpletons? My match is Marlowe;
Sciolists? My mate is Ben.

XIV

Womankind — "the cat-like nature,
False and fickle, vain and weak" —
What of this sad nomenclature
Suits my tongue, if I must speak?
Does the sex invite, repulse so,
Tempt, betray, by fits and starts?
So becalm but to convulse so,
Decking heads and breaking hearts?

XV

Well may you blaspheme at fortune!
I "threw Venus" (Ben, expound!)

Never did I need importune
  Her, of all the Olympian round.
Blessings on my benefactress!
  Cursings suit — for aught I know —
Those who twitched her by the back tress,
  Tugged and thought to turn her — so!

XVI

Therefore, since no leg to stand on
  Thus I'm left with, — joy or grief
Be the issue, — I abandon
  Hope or care you name me Chief!
Chief and king and Lord's anointed,
  I? — who never once have wished
Death before the day appointed:
  Lived and liked, not poohed and pished!

XVII

"Ah, but so I shall not enter,
  Scroll in hand, the common heart —
Stopped at surface: since at centre
  Song should reach *Welt-schmerz*, world-smart!"
"Enter in the heart?" Its shelly
  Cuirass guard mine, fore and aft!
Such song "enters in the belly
  And is cast out in the draught."

XVIII

Back then to our sherris-brewage!
  "Kingship" quotha? I shall wait —
Waive the present time: some new age . . .
  But let fools anticipate!

> Meanwhile greet me — "friend, good fellow,
> Gentle Will," my merry men!
> As for making Envy yellow
> With "Next Poet" — (Manners, Ben!)

The first stanza of "House" —

> "Shall I sonnet-sing you about myself?
> Do I live in a house you would like to see?
> Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
> 'Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?'" —

brings one face to face with the interminable controversies upon the autobiographical significance of Shakespeare's Sonnets. As volumes upon the subject have been written, it is not possible even adequately to review the various theories here. The controversialists may be broadly divided into those who read complicated autobiographical details into the sonnets, those who scout the idea of their being autobiographical at all, and those who take a middle ground. Of the first there are two factions: one of these believes that the opening sonnets were addressed to Lord William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and the other that they were addressed to Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton. The first theory dates back as far as 1832 when it was started by James Boaden, a journalist and the biographer of

Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. This theory has had many supporters and is associated to-day with the name of Thomas Tyler, who, in his edition of the Sonnets published in 1890, claimed to have identified the dark lady of the Sonnets with a lady of the Court, Mary Fitton and the mistress of the Earl of Pembroke. The theory, like most things of the sort, has its fascinations, and few people can read the Sonnets without being more or less impressed by it. It is based, however, upon a supposition so unlikely that it may be said to be proved incorrect, namely, that the dedication of the Sonnets to their "Onlie Begettor, Mr. W. H." is intended for "Mr. William Herbert." There was a Mr. William Hall, later a master printer, and the friend of Thomas Thorpe, the publisher of the Sonnets, who is much more likely to be the person meant. Lord Herbert was far too important a person to be addressed as Mr. W. H. As Mr. Lee points out, when Thorpe did dedicate books to Herbert he was careful to give full prominence to the titles and distinction of his patron. The Sonnets as we have already seen were not published with Shakespeare's sanction. In those days the author had no protection, and if a manuscript fell into the hands of a printer he could print it if he felt

so disposed. Mr. William Hall was in the habit of looking out for manuscripts and before he became a printer, in 1606, had one published by Southwell of which he himself wrote the dedication, to the "Vertuous Gentleman, Mathew Saunders, Esquire W. H. wisheth, with long life, a prosperous achievement of his good desires." "There is little doubt," writes Mr. Lee, "that the W. H. of the Southwell volume was Mr. William Hall, who, when he procured that manuscript for publication, was an humble auxiliary in the publishing army." To sum up in Mr. Lee's words his interesting and convincing chapter on "Thomas Thorpe and Mr. 'W. H.'" "'Mr. W. H.,' whom Thorpe described as the 'only begetter of these ensuing sonnets,' was in all probability the acquirer or procurer of the manuscript, who, figuratively speaking, brought the book into being either by first placing the manuscript in Thorpe's hands or by pointing out the means by which a copy might be acquired. To assign such significance to the word 'begetter' was entirely in Thorpe's vein. Thorpe described his rôle in the piratical enterprise of the 'Sonnets' as that of 'the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth,' *i.e.*, the hopeful speculator in the scheme. 'Mr. W. H.' doubtless

played the almost equally important part — one as well known then as now in commercial operations — of the 'vender' of the property to be exploited."

The Southampton theory is reared into a fine air-castle by Gerald Massey in his lengthy book on the Sonnets — truly entertaining reading but too ingenious to be convincing.

Finally Mr. Lee in his book looks at the subject in an unbiased and perfectly sane way. He thinks the opening Sonnets are to the Earl of Southampton, known to be Shakepeare's patron, but he warns us that exaggerated devotion was the hall-mark of the Sonnets of the age, and therefore what Shakespeare says of his young patron in these Sonnets need not be taken too literally as expressing the poet's sentiments, though he admits there may be a note of genuine feeling in them. Also he thinks that some of the sonnets reflecting moods of melancholy or a sense of sin may reveal the writer's inner consciousness. Possibly, too, the story of the "dark lady" may have some basis in fact, though he insists, "There is no clue to the lady's identity, and speculation on the topic is useless." Furthermore, he thinks it doubtful whether all the words in these Sonnets are to be taken with the seriousness implied, the affair

probably belonging only to the annals of gallantry.

It will be seen from the poem that Browning took the uncompromisingly non-autobiographical view of the Sonnets. In this stand present authoritative opinion would not justify him, but it speaks well for his insight and sympathy that he was not fascinated by the William Herbert theory which, at the time he wrote the poem, was very much in the air.

In "Shop" is given, in a way, the obverse side of the idea. If it is proved that the dramatic poet does not allow himself to appear in his work, the step toward regarding him as having no individuality aside from his work is an easy one. The allusions in the poem to the mercenariness of the "Shop-Keeper" seem to hit at the criticisms of Shakespeare's thrift, which enabled him to buy a home in his native place and retire there to live some years before the end of his life. In some quarters it has been customary to regard Shakespeare as devoting himself to dramatic literature in order to make money, as if this were a terrible slur on his character. The superiority of such an independent spirit over that of those who constantly sought patrons was quite manifest to Browning's mind or he would not have written this sarcastic bit of

symbolism, between the lines of which can be read that Browning was on Shakespeare's side.

HOUSE

I

Shall I sonnet-sing you about myself?
Do I live in a house you would like to see?
Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
"Unlock my heart with a sonnet key?"

II

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
"Take notice: this building remains on view,
Its suites of reception every one,
Its private apartment and bedroom too;

III

"For a ticket, apply to the Publisher."
No: thanking the public, I must decline.
A peep through my window, if folk prefer;
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

IV

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk
In a foreign land where an earthquake chanced:
And a house stood gaping, nought to balk
Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

V

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,
The inside gaped: exposed to day,
Right and wrong and common and queer,
Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

VI

The owner? Oh, he had been crushed, no doubt!
"Odd tables and chairs for a man of wealth!
What a parcel of musty old books about!
He smoked, — no wonder he lost his health!

VII

"I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.
A brasier? — the pagan, he burned perfumes!
You see it is proved, what the neighbors guessed:
His wife and himself had separate rooms."

VIII

Friends, the goodman of the house at least
Kept house to himself till an earthquake came:
'Tis the fall of its frontage permits you feast
On the inside arrangement you praise or blame.

IX

Outside should suffice for evidence:
And whoso desires to penetrate
Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense —
No optics like yours, at any rate!

X

"Hoity toity! A street to explore,
Your house the exception! '*With this same key*
Shakespeare unlocked his heart,' once more!"
Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

SHOP

I

So, friend, your shop was all your house!
Its front, astonishing the street,

Invited view from man and mouse
To what diversity of treat
Behind its glass — the single sheet!

II

What gimcracks, genuine Japanese:
Gape-jaw and goggle-eye, the frog;
Dragons, owls, monkeys, beetles, geese;
Some crush-nosed, human-hearted dog:
Queer names, too, such a catalogue!

III

I thought "And he who owns the wealth
Which blocks the window's vastitude,
— Ah, could I peep at him by stealth
Behind his ware, pass shop, intrude
On house itself, what scenes were viewed!

IV

"If wide and showy thus the shop,
What must the habitation prove?
The true house with no name a-top —
The mansion, distant one remove,
Once get him off his traffic-groove!

V

"Pictures he likes, or books perhaps;
And as for buying most and best,
Commend me to these City chaps!
Or else he's social, takes his rest
On Sundays, with a Lord for guest.

VI

"Some suburb-palace, parked about
And gated grandly, built last year:

The four-mile walk to keep off gout;
Or big seat sold by bankrupt peer:
But then he takes the rail, that's clear.

VII

"Or, stop! I wager, taste selects
Some out o' the way, some all-unknown
Retreat: the neighborhood suspects
Little that he who rambles lone
Makes Rothschild tremble on his throne!"

VIII

Nowise! Nor Mayfair residence
Fit to receive and entertain, —
Nor Hampstead villa's kind defence
From noise and crowd, from dust and drain, —
Nor country-box was soul's domain!

IX

Nowise! At back of all that spread
Of merchandize, woe's me, I find
A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,
The owner couched, his ware behind,
— In cupboard suited to his mind.

X

For why? He saw no use of life
But, while he drove a roaring trade,
To chuckle "Customers are rife!"
To chafe "So much hard cash outlaid
Yet zero in my profits made!

XI

"This novelty costs pains, but — takes?
Cumbers my counter! Stock no more!

This article, no such great shakes,
Fizzes like wildfire? Underscore
The cheap thing — thousands to the fore!"

XII

'Twas lodging best to live most nigh
(Cramp, coffinlike as crib might be)
Receipt of Custom; ear and eye
Wanted no outworld: "Hear and see
The bustle in the shop!" quoth he.

XIII

My fancy of a merchant-prince
Was different. Through his wares we groped
Our darkling way to — not to mince
The matter — no black den where moped
The master if we interloped!

XIV

Shop was shop only: household-stuff?
What did he want with comforts there?
"Walls, ceiling, floor, stay blank and rough,
So goods on sale show rich and rare!
'*Sell and scud home*' be shop's affair!"

XV

What might he deal in? Gems, suppose!
Since somehow business must be done
At cost of trouble, — see, he throws
You choice of jewels, everyone,
Good, better, best, star, moon and sun!

XVI

Which lies within your power of purse?
This ruby that would tip aright

Solomon's sceptre? Oh, your nurse
Wants simply coral, the delight
Of teething baby, — stuff to bite!

XVII

Howe'er your choice fell, straight you took
Your purchase, prompt your money rang
On counter, — scarce the man forsook
His study of the "Times," just swang
Till-ward his hand that stopped the clang, —

XVIII

Then off made buyer with a prize,
Then seller to his "Times" returned;
And so did day wear, wear, till eyes
Brightened apace, for rest was earned:
He locked door long ere candle burned.

XIX

And whither went he? Ask himself,
Not me! To change of scene, I think.
Once sold the ware and pursed the pelf,
Chaffer was scarce his meat and drink,
Nor all his music — money-chink.

XX

Because a man has shop to mind
In time and place, since flesh must live,
Needs spirit lack all life behind,
All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
All loves except what trade can give?

XXI

I want to know a butcher paints,
A baker rhymes for his pursuit,

Candlestick-maker much acquaints
His soul with song, or, haply mute,
Blows out his brains upon the flute!

XXII

But — shop each day and all day long!
Friend, your good angel slept, your star
Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
From where these sorts of treasures are,
There should our hearts be — Christ, how far!

These poems are valuable not only for furnishing an interesting interpretation of Shakespeare's character as a man and artist, but for the glimpses they give into Browning's stand toward his own art. He wished to be regarded primarily as a dramatic artist, presenting and interpreting the souls of his characters, and he must have felt keenly the stupid attitude which insisted always in reading "Browning's Philosophy" into all his poems. The fact that his objective material was of the soul rather than of the external actions of life has no doubt lent force to the supposition that Browning himself can be seen in everything he writes. It is true, nevertheless, that while much of his work is Shakespearian in its dramatic intensity, he had too forceful a philosophy of life to keep it from sometimes coming to the front. Besides he

has written many things avowedly personal as this chapter amply illustrates.

To what intensity of feeling Browning could rise when contemplating the genius of Shakespeare is revealed in his direct and outspoken tribute. Here there breathes an almost reverential attitude toward the one supremely great man he has ventured to portray.

THE NAMES

Shakespeare! — to such name's sounding, what succeeds
  Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell, —
  Act follows word, the speaker knows full well;
Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
Two names there are: That which the Hebrew reads
  With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
  Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven and hell,
Would own, "Thou didst create us!" Naught impedes
We voice the other name, man's most of might,
  Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love
Mutely await their working, leave to sight
  All of the issue as — below — above —
  Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
Though dread — this finite from that infinite.

CHAPTER III

A CRUCIAL PERIOD IN ENGLISH HISTORY

"WHOM the gods destroy they first make mad." Of no one in English history is this truer than of King Charles I. Just at a time when the nation was feeling the strength of its wings both in Church and State, when individuals were claiming the right to freedom of conscience in their form of worship and the people were growing more insistent for the recognition of their ancient rights and liberties, secured to them, in the first place, by the Magna Charta, —just at this time looms up the obstruction of a King so imbued with the defunct ideal of the divine right of Kings that he is blind to the tendencies of the age. What wonder, then, if the swirling waters of discontent should rise higher and higher until he became engulfed in their fury.

The history of the reign of Charles I. is one full of involved details, yet the broader aspects of it, the great events which chiseled into shape the future of England stand out

in bold relief in front of a background of interminable bickerings. There was constant quarreling between the factions within the English church, and between the Protestants and the Catholics, complicated by the discontent of the people and at times the nobles because of the autocratic, vacillating policy of the King.

Among these epoch-bringing events were the emergence of the Puritans from the chaos of internecine church squabbles, the determined raising of the voice of the people in the Long Parliament, where King and people finally came to an open clash in the impeachment of the King's most devoted minister, Wentworth, Earl Strafford, by Pym, the great leader in the House of Commons, ending in Strafford's execution; the Grand Remonstrance, which sounded in no uncertain tones the tocsin of the coming revolution; and finally the King's impeachment of Pym, Hampden, Holles, Hazelrigg and Strode, one of the many ill-advised moves of this Monarch which at once precipitated the Revolution.

These cataclysms at home were further intensified by the Scottish Invasion and the Irish Rebellion.

It is not surprising that Browning should

CHARLES I IN SCENE OF IMPEACHMENT

have been attracted to this period of English history, when he contemplated the writing of a play on an English subject. His liberty-loving mind would naturally find congenial occupation in depicting this great English struggle for liberty. Yet the hero of the play is not Pym, the leader of the people, but Strafford the supporter of the King. The dramatic reasons are sufficient to account for this. Strafford's career was picturesque and tragic and his personality so striking that more than one interpretation of his remarkable life is possible.

The interpretation will differ according to whether one is partisan in hatred or admiration of his character and policy, or possesses the larger quality of sympathetic appreciation of the man and the problems with which he had to deal. Any one coming to judge him in this latter spirit would undoubtedly perceive all the fine points in Strafford's nature and would balance these against his theories of government to the better understanding of this extraordinary man.

It is almost needless to say that Browning's perception of Strafford's character was penetrating and sympathetic. Strafford's devotion to his King had in it not only the element of loyalty to the liege, but an element

of personal love which would make an especial appeal to Browning. He, in consequence, seizes upon this trait as the key-note of his portrayal of Strafford.

The play is, on the whole, accurate in its historical details, though the poet's imagination has added many a flying buttress to the structure.

Forster's lives of the English Statesmen in Lardner's Cyclopædia furnished plenty of material, and he was besides familiar with some if not all of Forster's materials for the lives. One of the interesting surprises in connection with Browning's literary career was the fact divulged some years ago that he had actually helped Forster in the preparation of the Life of Strafford. Indeed it is thought that he wrote it almost entirely from the notes of Forster. Dr. Furnivall first called attention to this, and later the life of Strafford was reprinted as "Robert Browning's Prose Life of Strafford."[1] In his Forewords to this volume, Dr. Furnivall, who, among many other claims to distinction, was the president of the "London Browning Society," writes, "Three times during his life did Browning speak to me about his prose 'Life of Strafford.' The first time he said

[1] Estes and Lauriat, Boston, Mass.

only — in the course of chat — that very few people had any idea of how much he had helped John Forster in it. The second time he told me at length that one day he went to see Forster and found him very ill, and anxious about the 'Life of Strafford,' which he had promised to write at once, to complete a volume of 'Lives of Eminent British Statesmen' for Lardner's 'Cabinet Cyclopædia.' Forster had finished the 'Life of Eliot' — the first in the volume — and had just begun that of Strafford, for which he had made full collections and extracts; but illness had come on, he couldn't work, the book ought to be completed forthwith, as it was due in the serial issue of volumes; what *was* he to do? 'Oh,' said Browning, 'don't trouble about it. I'll take your papers and do it for you.' Forster thanked his young friend heartily, Browning put the Strafford papers under his arm, walked off, worked hard, finished the Life, and it came out to time in 1836, to Forster's great relief, and passed under his name." Professor Gardiner, the historian, was of the opinion from internal evidence that the Life was more Browning's than Forster's. He said to Furnivall, "It is not a historian's conception of the character but a poet's. I am certain that it's not Forster's. Yes, it

makes mistakes in facts and dates, but, it has got the man — in the main." In this opinion Furnivall concurs. Of the last paragraph in the history he exclaims, "I could swear it was Browning's": — The paragraph in question sums up the character of Strafford and is interesting in this connection, as giving hints, though not the complete picture of the Strafford of the Drama.

"A great lesson is written in the life of this truly extraordinary person. In the career of Strafford is to be sought the justification of the world's 'appeal from tyranny to God.' In him Despotism had at length obtained an instrument with mind to comprehend, and resolution to act upon, her principles in their length and breadth, — and enough of her purposes were effected by him, to enable mankind to 'see as from a tower the end of all.' I cannot discern one false step in Strafford's public conduct, one glimpse of a recognition of an alien principle, one instance of a dereliction of the law of his being, which can come in to dispute the decisive result of the experiment, or explain away its failure. The least vivid fancy will have no difficulty in taking up the interrupted design, and by wholly enfeebling, or materially emboldening, the insignificant nature of Charles; and by accord-

ing some half-dozen years of immunity to the 'fretted tenement' of Strafford's 'fiery soul, — contemplate then, for itself, the perfect realization of the scheme of 'making the prince the most absolute lord in Christendom.' That done, — let it pursue the same course with respect to Eliot's noble imaginings, or to young Vane's dreamy aspirings, and apply in like manner a fit machinery to the working out the projects which made the dungeon of the one a holy place, and sustained the other in his self-imposed exile. — The result is great and decisive! It establishes, in renewed force, those principles of political conduct which have endured, and must continue to endure, 'like truth from age to age.'" The history, on the whole, lacks the grasp in the portrayal of Wentworth to be found in the drama. C. H. Firth, commenting upon this says truly, "One might almost say that in the first, Strafford was represented as he appeared to his opponents, and in the second as he appeared to himself; or that, having painted Strafford as he was, Browning painted him again as he wished to be. In the biography Strafford is exhibited as a man of rare gifts and noble qualities; yet in his political capacity, merely the conscious, the devoted tool of a tyrant. In the tragedy, on the other

hand, Strafford is the champion of the King's will against the people's, but yet looks forward to the ultimate reconciliation of Charles and his subjects, and strives for it after his own fashion. He loves the master he serves, and dies for him, but when the end comes he can proudly answer his accusers, 'I have loved England too.'"

The play opens at the important moment of Wentworth's return to London from Ireland, where for some time he had been governor. The occasion of his return, according to Gardiner, was a personal quarrel with the Chancellor Loftus, of Ireland. Both men were allowed to come to England to plead their cause, which resulted in the victory of Wentworth. In the play Pym says, "Ay, the Court gives out His own concerns have brought him back: I know 'tis the King calls him." The authority for this remark is found in the Forster-Browning Life. "In the danger threatened by the Scots' Covenant, Wentworth was Charles's only hope; the King sent for him, saying he desired his personal counsel and attendance. He wrote: 'The Scots' Covenant begins to spread too far, yet, for all this, I will not have you take notice that I have sent for you, but pretend some other occasion of business.'" Certain it is that from this time Wentworth

became the most trusted counsellor of Charles, that is, as far as Charles was capable of trusting any one. The condition of affairs to which Wentworth returned is brought out in the play in a thoroughly alive and human manner. We are introduced to the principal actors in the struggle for their rights and privileges against the government of Charles meeting in a house near Whitehall. Among the "great-hearted" men are Hampden, Hollis, the younger Vane, Rudyard, Fiennes — all leaders in the "Faction," — Presbyterians, Loudon and other members of the Scots' commissioners. A bit of history has been drawn upon for this opening scene, for according to the Forster-Browning Life, "There is no doubt that a close correspondence with the Scotch commissioners, headed by Lords Loudon and Dumferling, was entered into under the management of Pym and Hampden. Whenever necessity obliged the meetings to be held in London, they took place at Pym's house in Gray's Inn Lane." In the talk between these men the political situation in England at the time from the point of view of the liberal party is brought vividly before the reader.

There has been no Parliament in England for ten years, hence the people have had no

say in the direction of the government. The growing dissatisfaction of the people at being thus deprived of their rights focussed itself upon the question of "ship-money." The taxes levied by the King for the maintainance of a fleet were loudly objected to upon all sides. That a fleet was a necessary means of protection in those threatening times is not to be doubted, but the objections of the people were grounded upon the fact that the King levied these taxes upon his own authority. "Ship-money, it was loudly declared," says Gardiner, "was undeniably a tax, and the ancient customs of the realm, recently embodied in the Petition of Right, had announced with no doubtful voice that no tax could be levied without consent of Parliament. Even this objection was not the full measure of the evil. If Charles could take this money without the consent of Parliament, he need not, unless some unforeseen emergency arose, ever summon a Parliament again. The true question at issue was whether Parliament formed an integral part of the Constitution or not." Other taxes were objected to on the same grounds, and the more determined the King was not to summon a Parliament, the greater became the political ferment.

At the same time the religious ferment was

THOMAS WENTWORTH, EARL OF STRAFFORD

centering itself upon hatred of Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury. His policy was to silence opposition to the methods of worship then followed by the Church of England, by the terrors of the Star Chamber. The Puritans were smarting under the sentence which had been passed upon the three pamphleteers, William Prynne, Henry Burton, and John Bastwick, who had expressed their opinions of the practises of the church with great outspokenness. Prynne called upon pious King Charles "to do justice on the whole Episcopal order by which he had been robbed of the love of God and of his people, and which aimed at plucking the crown from his head, that they might set it on their own ambitious pates." Burton hinted that "the sooner the office of the Bishops was abolished the better it would be for the nation." Bastwick, who had been brought up in the straitest principles of Puritanism, had ended his pamphlet "*Flagellum Pontificis*," with this outburst, "Take notice, so far am I from flying or fearing, as I resolve to make war against the Beast, and every hint of Antichrist, all the days of my life. If I die in that battle, so much the sooner I shall be sent in a chariot of triumph to heaven; and when I come there, I will, with those that are under the altar cry,

'How long, Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood upon them that dwell upon the earth?'"

These men were called before the Star Chamber upon a charge of libel. The sentence was a foregone conclusion, and was so outrageous that its result could only be the strengthening of opposition. The "muckworm" Cottington, as Browning calls him, suggested the sentence which was carried out. The men were condemned to lose their ears, to pay a fine of £5000 each, and to be imprisoned for the remainder of their lives in the castles of Carnarvon, Launceston, and Lancaster. Finch, not satisfied with this, added the savage wish that Prynne should be branded on the cheek with the letters S. L., to stand for "seditious libeller," and this was also done.

The account of the execution of this sentence is almost too horrible to read. Some one who recorded the scene wrote, "The humours of the people were various; some wept, some laughed, and some were very reserved." Prynne, whose sufferings had been greatest for he had been burned as well as having his ears taken off, was yet able to indulge in a grim piece of humor touching the letters S. L. branded on his cheeks. He

called them "Stigmata Laudis," the "Scars of Laud," on his way back to prison. Popular demonstrations in favor of the prisoners were made all along the road when they were taken to their respective prisons, where they were allowed neither pen, ink nor books. Fearful lest they might somehow still disseminate their heretical doctrines to the outer world, the council removed them to still more distant prisons, in the Scilly Isles, in Guernsey and in Jersey. Retaliation against this treatment found open expression. "A copy of the Star Chamber decree was nailed to a board. Its corners were cut off as the ears of Laud's victims had been cut off at Westminster. A broad ink mark was drawn round Laud's name. An inscription declared that 'The man that puts the saints of God into a pillory of wood stands here in a pillory of ink!'"

Things were brought to a crisis in Scotland also, through hatred of Laud and the new prayer-book. The king, upon his visit to Scotland, had been shocked at the slovenly appearance and the slovenly ritual of the Scottish Church, which reflected strongly survivals of the Presbyterianism of an earlier time. The King wrote to the Scottish Bishops soon after his return to England: "We, tendering the good and peace of that Church by

having good and decent order and discipline observed therein, whereby religion and God's worship may increase, and considering that there is nothing more defective in that Church than the want of a Book of Common Prayer and uniform service to be kept in all the churches thereof, and the want of canons for the uniformity of the same, we are hereby pleased to authorise you as the representative body of that Church, and do herewith will and require you to condescend upon a form of Church service to be used therein, and to set down the canons for the uniformity of the discipline thereof." Laud, who as Archbishop of Canterbury had no jurisdiction over Scottish Bishops, put his finger into the pie as secretary of the King. As Gardiner says, "He conveyed instructions to the Bishops, remonstrated with proceedings which shocked his sense of order, and held out prospects of advancement to the zealous. Scotchmen naturally took offense. They did not trouble themselves to distinguish between the secretary and the archbishop. They simply said that the Pope of Canterbury was as bad as the Pope of Rome."

The upshot of it all was that in May, 1637, the "new Prayer-book" was sent to Scotland, and every minister was ordered to buy two

copies on pain of outlawry. Riots followed. It was finally decided that it must be settled once for all whether a King had any right to change the forms of worship without the sanction of a legislative assembly. Then came the Scottish Covenant which declared the intention of the signers to uphold religious liberty. The account of the signing of this covenant is one of the most impressive episodes in all history. The Covenant was carried on the 28th of February, 1638, to the Grey Friars' Church to which all the gentlemen present in Edinburgh had been summoned. The scene has been most sympathetically described by Gardiner.

"At four o'clock in the grey winter evening, the noblemen, the Earl of Sutherland leading the way began to sign. Then came the gentlemen, one after the other until nearly eight. The next day the ministers were called on to testify their approval, and nearly three hundred signatures were obtained before night. The Commissioners of the boroughs signed at the same time.

"On the third day the people of Edinburgh were called on to attest their devotion to the cause which was represented by the Covenant. Tradition long loved to tell how the honored parchment, carried back to the Grey Friars,

was laid out on a tombstone in the churchyard, whilst weeping multitudes pressed round in numbers too great to be contained in any building. There are moments when the stern Scottish nature breaks out into an enthusiasm less passionate, but more enduring, than the frenzy of a Southern race. As each man and woman stepped forward in turn, with the right hand raised to heaven before the pen was grasped, every one there present knew that there would be no flinching amongst that band of brothers till their religion was safe from intrusive violence.

"Modern narrators may well turn their attention to the picturesqueness of the scene, to the dark rocks of the Castle crag over against the churchyard, and to the earnest faces around. The men of the seventeenth century had no thought to spare for the earth beneath or for the sky above. What they saw was their country's faith trodden under foot, what they felt was the joy of those who had been long led astray, and had now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls."

Such were the conditions that brought on the Scotch war, neither Charles nor Wentworth being wise enough to make concessions to the Covenanters.

The grievances against the King's Minister Wentworth are in this opening scene shown as being aggravated by the fact that the men of the "Faction" regard him as a deserter from their cause, Pym, himself being one of the number who is loth to think Wentworth stands for the King's policy.

The historical ground for the assumption lies in the fact that Wentworth was one of the leaders of the opposition in the Parliament of 1628.

The reason for this was largely personal, because of Buckingham's treatment of him. Wentworth had refused to take part in the collection of the forced loan of 1626, and was dismissed from his official posts in consequence. When he further refused to subscribe to that loan himself he was imprisoned in the Marshalsea and at Depford. Regarding himself as personally attacked by Buckingham, he joined the opposition. Yet, as Firth points out, "fiercely as he attacked the King's ministers, he was careful to exonerate the King." He concludes his list of grievances by saying, "This hath not been done by the King, but by projectors." Again, "Whether we shall look upon the King or his people, it did never more behove this great physician the parliament, to effect a true

consent amongst the parties than now. Both are injured, both to be cured. By one and the same thing hath the King and people been hurt. I speak truly both for the interest of the King and the people."

His intention was to find some means of cooperation which would leave the people their liberty and yet give the crown its prerogative, "Let us make what laws we can, there must — nay, there will be a trust left in the crown."

It will be seen by any unbiased critic that Wentworth was only half for the people even at this time. On the other hand, it is not astonishing that men, heart and soul for the people, should consider Wentworth's subsequent complete devotion to the cause of the King sufficient to brand him as an apostate. The fact that he received so many official dignities from the King also leant color to the supposition that personal ambition was a leading motive with him. With true dramatic instinct Browning has centered this feeling and made the most of it in the attitude of Pym's party, while he offsets it later in the play by showing us the reality of the man Strafford.

There is no very authentic source for the idea also brought out in this first scene that

Strafford and Pym had been warm personal friends. The story is told by Dr. James Welwood, one of the physicians of William III., who, in the year 1700, published a volume entitled "Memoirs, of the most material transactions in England for the last hundred years preceding the Revolution of 1688." Without mentioning any source he tells the following story; "There had been a long and intimate friendship between Mr. Pym and him [Wentworth], and they had gone hand in hand in everything in the House of Commons. But when Sir Thomas Wentworth was upon making his peace with the Court, he sent to Pym to meet him alone at Greenwich; where he began in a set speech to sound Mr. Pym about the dangers they were like to run by the courses they were in; and what advantages they might have if they would but listen to some offers which would probably be made them from the Court. Pym understanding his speech stopped him short with this expression: 'You need not use all this art to tell me you have a mind to leave us; but remember what I tell you, you are going to be undone. But remember, that though you leave us now I will never leave you while your head is upon your shoulders.' "

Though only a tradition this was entirely too useful a suggestion not to be used. The intensity of the situation between the leaders on opposite sides is enhanced tenfold by bringing into the field a personal sentiment.

The attitude of Pym's followers is reflected again in their opinion of Wentworth's Irish rule. Although Wentworth's policy seemed to be successful in Ireland, the very fact of its success would condemn it in the eyes of the popular party; besides later developments revealed its weaknesses. How it appeared to the eyes of a non-fanatical observer at this time may be gathered from the following letter of Sir Thomas Roe to the Queen of Bohemia, written in 1634.

"The Lord Deputy of Ireland doth great wonders, and governs like a King, and hath taught that Kingdom to show us an example of envy, by having parliaments, and knowing wisely how to use them; for they have given the King six subsidies, which will arise to £240,000, and they are like to have the liberty we contended for, and grace from his Majesty worth their gift double; and which is worth much more, the honor of good intelligence and love between the King and people, which I would to God our great wits had had eyes

to see. This is a great service, and to give your Majesty a character of the man, — he is severe abroad and in business, and sweet in private conversation; retired in his friendships, but very firm; a terrible judge and a strong enemy; a servant violently zealous in his Master's ends, and not negligent of his own; one that will have what he will, and though of great reason, he can make his will greater when it may serve him; affecting glory by a seeming contempt; one that cannot stay long in the middle region of fortune, being entreprenant; but will either be the greatest man in England, or much less than he is; lastly, one that may (and his nature lies fit for it, for he is ambitious to do what others will not), do your Majesty very great service, if you can make him."

In order to be in sympathy with the play throughout and especially with the first scene all this historical background must be kept in mind, for the talk gives no direct information, it merely in an absolutely dramatic fashion reveals the feelings and opinions of the men upon the situation, just as friends at a dinner party might discuss one of our own less strenuous political situations — all present being perfectly familiar with the issues at stake.

STRAFFORD

ACT I

SCENE I. — *A House near Whitehall.* HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the* younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES *and many of the Presbyterian Party:* LOUDON *and other Scots' Commissioners.*

Vane. I say, if he be here —
Rudyard. (And he is here!) —
Hollis. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate — think — England's fate!
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!
Vane. You say so, Hollis? Well, I must be still.
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence, should suspend
England's combined endeavor: little need
To name him!
Rudyard. For you are his brother, Hollis!
Hampden. Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him that,
When he forgets the Mother of us all.
Rudyard. Do I forget her?
Hampden. You talk idle hate
Against her foe: is that so strange a thing?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?
A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went:
But David — five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . . .
Rudyard. Be you as still as David!
Finnees. Here's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments;

Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us!

Rudyard. Let's hope for news of them now he returns —
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought!
— But I'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now, by Heaven,
They may be cool who can, silent who will —
Some have a gift that way! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm
Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woeful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be, —
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out!) — in aught he feared
To venture on before; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death;
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villanies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure
— If he dies under it, what harm? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear: — how all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood too
— Can I be still?

Hampden. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now! The year he left us,

The People in full Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King;
And now, he'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause: England is here!
Hampden. And who despairs of England?
Rudyard. That do I,
If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed-for back again. I say,
I do despair.
Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this —
Which all true men say after me, not loud
But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer!
This King, who treads our England underfoot,
Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage; friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
Some voice to ask, "Why shrink? Am I not by?"
Now, one whom England loved for serving her,
Found in his heart to say, "I know where best
The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
Upon me when you trample." Witness, you!
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.
But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .
Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'Tis well said, Vane!
Vane. — Who has not so forgotten Runnymead! —
Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane! Go on!
Vane. — There are some little signs of late she knows
The ground no place for her. She glances round,
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
On other service: what if she arise?

No! the King beckons, and beside him stands
The same bad man once more, with the same smile
And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,
Or catch at us and rise?
Voices. The Renegade!
Haman! Ahithophel!
Hampden. Gentlemen of the North,
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well:
Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.
Vane. Hampden!
Fiennes. Stay, Vane!
Loudon. Be just and patient, Vane!
Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon! you
Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back it; you are free in Scotland still:
While we are brothers, hope's for England yet.
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes? to quench
This last of hopes? that he brings war with him?
Know you the man's self? what he dares?
Loudon. We know,
All know — 'tis nothing new.
Vane. And what's new, then,
In calling for his life? Why, Pym himself —
You must have heard — ere Wentworth dropped our cause
He would see Pym first; there were many more
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
But for these Wentworth cared not; only, Pym
He would see — Pym and he were sworn, 'tis said,
To live and die together; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument

Lost nothing on his lips; he'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track; they two combined
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out;
One glance — you know Pym's eye — one word was all:
"You leave us, Wentworth! while your head is on,
I'll not leave you."
Hampden. Has he left Wentworth, then?
Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,
Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?
Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?
Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.
Hampden. Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!
Vane. No, no!
Silent I can be: not indifferent!
Hampden. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare
His anger, cast not England quite away
In this her visitation!
A Puritan. Seven years long
The Midianite drove Israel into dens
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

PYM *enters*

Even Gideon!
Pym. Wentworth's come: nor sickness, care,
The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,
Could keep him from the King. He has not reached
Whitehall: they've hurried up a Council there
To lose no time and find him work enough.
Where's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament . . .
Loudon. Holds firm:

We were about to read reports.
Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.
Loudon and other Scots. Great God!
An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!
Pym. The King's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth's here;
But still some little form might be kept up.
Hampden. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much to say!
Hollis. The rumor's false, then . . .
Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back: I know
'Tis the King calls him. Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there's talk enough, by this, —
Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
Which, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down
At the sword's point."
A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym,
England's and God's — one blow!
Pym. A goodly thing —
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark above:
Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,

From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns — it dawns)
Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men?
We would not — no, we would not give that up!
Hampden. And one name shall be dearer than all names.
When children, yet unborn, are taught that name
After their fathers', — taught what matchless man . . .
Pym. . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's should be still
That name?
Rudyard and others. We have just said it, Pym! His death
Saves her! We said it — there's no way beside!
I'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
And purged the land.
Vane. No villanous striking-down!
Rudyard. No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
And shout for it. No Feltons!
Pym. Rudyard, no!
England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again
Of England in her servants — but I'll think
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!
Vane and others. Wentworth? Apostate! Judas! Double-dyed
A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .
Pym. . . . Who says
Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,
Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,

Along the streets to see the people pass,
And read in every island-countenance
Fresh argument for God against the King, —
Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,
(You've joined us, Hampden — Hollis, you as well,)
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

Vane. To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause
In the Petition of Right: he framed such clause
One month before he took at the King's hand
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
Denounced.

Pym. Too true! Never more, never more
Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends — all here are fast my friends —
But I shall never quite forget that friend.
And yet it could not but be real in him!
You, Vane, — you, Rudyard, have no right to trust
To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?
Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood
Like water?

Hampden. Ireland is Aceldama.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
To please the King, now that he knows the King?
The People or the King? and that King, Charles!

Hampden. Pym, all here know you: you'll not set your heart
On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's since he left us . . .

[*Shouting without.*

Vane. There! he comes,
And they shout for him! Wentworth's at Whitehall,
The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,

Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,
Now, while you tell us here how changed he is!
Hear you?

Pym. And yet if 'tis a dream, no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after; — that he led their cause
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls, and close content
That violence, which something mars even right
Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!

Hampden. We meet here to accomplish certain good
By obvious means, and keep tradition up
Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
In this poor chamber: nor without effect
Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply
By these her delegates. Remains alone
That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall —
But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here —
Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place?
Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
And keep the old arms at their steady play?
Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read the list!

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern parts

Where Wentworth's influence . . .

[*Shouting.*

Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
We English had free leave to think; till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all's changed: they change the first,
They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .

Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no act
Serves England!

Voices. Vane for England!

Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

In the second scene of the first act, the man upon whom the popular party has been heaping opprobrium appears to speak for himself. Again the historical background must be known in order that the whole drift of the scene may be understood. Wentworth is talking with Lady Carlisle, a woman celebrated for her beauty and her wit, and fond of having friendships with great men. Various opinions of this beautiful woman have been expressed by those who knew her. "Her beauty," writes one, "brought her adorers of all ranks, courtiers, and poets, and statesmen; but she remained untouched by their worship." Sir Toby Mathews who pre-

fixed to a collection of letters published in 1660 "A character of the most excellent Lady, Lucy, Countess of Carlisle," writes that she will "freely discourse of love, and hear both the fancies and powers of it; but if you will needs bring it within knowledge, and boldly direct it to herself, she is likely to divert the discourse, or, at least, seem not to understand it. By which you may know her humour, and her justice; for since she cannot love in earnest she would have nothing from love." According to him she filled her mind "with gallant fancies, and high and elevated thoughts," and "her wit being most eminent among the rest of her great abilities," even the conversation of those most famed for it was affected. Quite another view of her is given in a letter of Voiture's written to Mr. Gordon on leaving England in 1623.

"In one human being you let me see more treasures than there are there [the Tower], and even more lions and leopards. It will not be difficult for you to guess after this that I speak of the Countess of Carlisle. For there is nobody else of whom all this good and evil can be said. No matter how dangerous it is to let the memory dwell upon her, I have not, so far, been able to keep mine from it, and, quite honestly, I would not give the picture of

her that lingers in my mind, for all the loveliest things I have seen in my life. I must confess that she is an enchanting personality, and there would not be a woman under heaven so worthy of affection, if she only knew what it was, and if she had as sensitive a nature as she has a reasonable mind. But with the temperament we know she possesses, there is nothing to be said except that she is the most lovable of all things not good, and the most delightful poison that nature ever concocted." Browning himself says he first sketched her character from Mathews, but finding that rather artificial, he used Voiture and Waller, who referred to her as the "bright Carlisle of the Court of Heaven." It should be remembered that she had become a widow and was considerably older at the time of her friendship with Wentworth than when Voiture wrote of her, and was probably better balanced, and truly worthy of Wentworth's own appreciation of her when he wrote, "A nobler nor a more intelligent friendship did I never meet with in my life." A passage in a letter to Laud indicates that Wentworth was well aware of the practical advantage in having such a friend as Lady Carlisle at Court. "I judge her ladyship very considerable. She is often in place, and extremely well skilled how

to speak with advantage and spirit for those friends she professeth unto, which will not be many. There is this further in her disposition, she will not seem to be the person she is not, an ingenuity I have always observed and honoured her for."

It is something of a shock to learn that even before the Wentworth episode was well over, she became a friend of his bitterest foe, Pym. Gardiner sums up her character in as fair a way as any one, — and not at all inconsistent with Browning's portrayal of her.

"Lady Carlisle had now been for many years a widow. She had long been the reigning beauty at Court, and she loved to mingle political intrigue with social intercourse. For politics as a serious occupation she had no aptitude; but, in middle age, she felt a woman's pride in attaching to herself the strong heads by which the world was ruled, as she had attached to herself in youth, the witty courtier or the agile dancer. It was worth a statesman's while to cultivate her acquaintance. She could make him a power in society as well as in Council, could worm out a secret which it behoved him to know, and could convey to others his suggestions with assured fidelity. The calumny which treated Strafford, as it afterwards treated Pym, as her accepted

lover, may be safely disregarded. But there can be no doubt that purely personal motives attached her both to Strafford and Pym. For Strafford's theory of Monarchical government she cared as little as she cared for Pym's theory of Parliamentary government. It may be, too, that some mingled feeling may have arisen in Strafford's breast. It was something to have an ally at Court ready at all times to plead his cause with gay enthusiasm, to warn him of hidden dangers, and to offer him the thread of that labyrinth which, under the name of 'the Queen's side,' was such a mystery to him. It was something, too, no doubt, that this advocate was not a grey haired statesman, but a woman, in spite of growing years, of winning grace and sparkling vivacity of eye and tongue."

Strafford, himself, Browning brings before us, ill, and worn out with responsibility as he was upon his return to England at this time. Carlisle tactfully lets him know how he will have to face criticisms from other councillors about the King, and how even the confidence of the fickle King cannot be relied upon. In his conference with the King in this scene, Strafford, at last, wins the confidence of the King as history relates. Wentworth, horrified at the way in which a war with Scotland has

been precipitated, carries his point, that Parliaments should be called in Ireland and England. This will give time for preparation, and at the same time an opportunity of convincing the people that the war is justified by Scotland's treason, so causing them willingly to grant subsidies for the expense of the war. To turn from the play to history, Commissioners from the Scottish Parliament, the Earls of Loudon and Dumferling had arrived in London to ask that the acts of the Scottish Parliament might receive confirmation from the King. This question was referred to a committee of eight Privy Councillors. Propositions were made to put the Scotch Commissioners in prison; however, the King finally decided to dismiss them without treating with them. Scottish indignation of course ran high at this proceeding, and here Wentworth stepped in and won the King to his policy of ruling Scotland directly from England. "He insisted," writes Gardiner, "that a Parliament, and a Parliament alone, was the remedy fitted for the occasion. Laud and Hamilton gave him their support. He carried his point with the Committee. What was of more importance he carried it with the King." And as one writer expressed it the Lords were of the opinion that "his Majesty should make

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trial of that once more, that so he might leave his people without excuse, and have where withal to justify himself to God and the world that in his own inclination he desired the old way; but that if his people should not cheerfully, according to their duties, meet him in that, especially in this exigent when his kingdom and person are in apparent danger, the world might see he is forced, contrary to his own inclination, to use extraordinary means rather than, by the peevishness of some few factious spirits, to suffer his state and government to be lost."

In the play as in history, Charles now confers upon Wentworth an Earldom. Shortly after this the King "was prepared," says Gardiner, "to confer upon his faithful Minister that token of his confidence which he had twice refused before. On January 12, Wentworth received the Earldom of Strafford, and a week later he exchanged the title of Lord-Deputy of Ireland for the higher dignity of Lord-Lieutenant."

In his conference with Pym, Strafford who, in talking to Carlisle, had shown a slight wavering toward the popular party, because of finding himself so surrounded by difficulties, stands firm; this episode is a striking

working up of the tradition of the friendship between these two men.

The influence of the Queen upon Charles is the last strand in this tangled skein of human destiny brought out by Browning in the scene. The Parliament that Wentworth wants she is afraid of lest it should ask for a renewal of the persecution of the Catholics. The vacillating Charles, in an instant, is ready to repudiate his interview with Wentworth, and act only to please the Queen.

SCENE II. — *Whitehall*

Lady CARLISLE *and* WENTWORTH

Wentworth. And the King?
Lady Carlisle. Wentworth, lean on me! Sit then!
I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.
Wentworth. No; — or, Lucy, just your arm;
I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?
Lady Carlisle. Confides in you.
Wentworth. Why? or, why now? — They have kind throats, the knaves!
Shout for me — they!
Lady Carlisle. You come so strangely soon:
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd —
Did they shout for you?
Wentworth. Wherefore should they not?
Does the King take such measures for himself?
Besides, there's such a dearth of malcontents,

You say!

Lady Carlisle. I said but few dared carp at you.

Wentworth. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I!
He's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me too!

Lady Carlisle. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Wentworth. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us, — then the King will grant me — what?
That he for once put these aside and say —
"Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!"

Lady Carlisle. You professed
You would be calm.

Wentworth. Lucy, and I am calm!
How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
How shall I serve the King? Time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half. His footstep! No.
Quick, then, before I meet him, — I am calm —
Why does the King distrust me?

Lady Carlisle. He does not
Distrust you.

Wentworth. Lucy, you can help me; you
Have even seemed to care for me: one word!
Is it the Queen?

Lady Carlisle. No, not the Queen: the party
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.

Wentworth. I know, I know: old Vane, too, he's one too?
Go on — and he's made Secretary. Well?

Or leave them out and go straight to the charge —
The charge!
Lady Carlisle. Oh, there's no charge, no precise charge;
Only they sneer, make light of — one may say,
Nibble at what you do.
Wentworth. I know! but, Lucy,
I reckoned on you from the first! — Go on!
— Was sure could I once see this gentle friend
When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
To help her . . . what am I?
Lady Carlisle. You thought of me,
Dear Wentworth?
Wentworth. But go on! The party here!
Lady Carlisle. They do not think your Irish government
Of that surpassing value . . .
Wentworth. The one thing
Of value! The one service that the crown
May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes
In power, to vex me — not that they do vex,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried, the sole support that's left the King!
Lady Carlisle. So the Archbishop says.
Wentworth. Ah? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in my defence
May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these Saviles
Nibble? They nibble? — that's the very word!
Lady Carlisle. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .
Wentworth. Enough! 'tis too unworthy, — I am not
So patient as I thought. What's Pym about?
Lady Carlisle. Pym?
Wentworth. Pym and the People.
Lady Carlisle. O, the Faction!
Extinct — of no account: there'll never be

Another Parliament.

Wentworth. Tell Savile that!
You may know — (ay, you do — the creatures here
Never forget!) that in my earliest life
I was not . . . much that I am now! The King
May take my word on points concerning Pym
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands! I'll not be their tool
Who might be Pym's friend yet.
But there's the King!
Where is he?

Lady Carlisle. Just apprised that you arrive.

Wentworth. And why not here to meet me? I was told
He sent for me, nay, longed for me.

Lady Carlisle. Because, —
He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now
About this Scots affair.

Wentworth. A Council sits?
They have not taken a decided course
Without me in the matter?

Lady Carlisle. I should say . . .

Wentworth. The war? They cannot have agreed to that?
Not the Scots' war? — without consulting me —
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,
How easy to dispense with? — Ah, you too
Against me! well, — the King may take his time.
— Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish: mine
Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.

Lady Carlisle. For life or death I am your own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*

Wentworth. Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,
Forsake the People!
I did not forsake

The People: they shall know it, when the King
Will trust me! — who trusts all beside at once,
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
And am not trusted: have but saved the throne:
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
And am not trusted. But he'll see me now.
Weston is dead: the Queen's half English now —
More English: one decisive word will brush
These insects from . . . the step I know so well!
The King! But now, to tell him. . . no — to ask
What's in me he distrusts: — or, best begin
By proving that this frightful Scots affair
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,
And the flesh fails, now, and the time is come,
And one false step no way to be repaired.
You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM *enters.*

Wentworth. I little thought of you just then.
Pym. No? I
Think always of you, Wentworth.
Wentworth. The old voice!
I wait the King, sir.
Pym. True — you look so pale!
A Council sits within; when that breaks up
He'll see you.
Wentworth. Sir, I thank you.
Pym. Oh, thank Laud!
You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs
The case is desperate: he'll not be long
To-day: he only means to prove, to-day,
We English all are mad to have a hand
In butchering the Scots for serving God
After their fathers' fashion: only that!

WHITEHALL

Wentworth. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!
(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'Tis kind
To tell me what the Council does.
Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came? no need: you shall have all
The credit, trust me!
Wentworth. Have the Council dared —
They have not dared . . . that is — I know you not.
Farewell, sir: times are changed.
Pym. — Since we two met
At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though we be,
You cut a figure, makes some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!
Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,
Just to decide a question; have you, now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us?
Wentworth. Sir!
Pym. Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend.
Think not I mean the advantage is with me.
I was about to say that, for my part,
I never quite held up my head since then —
Was quite myself since then: for first, you see,
I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.
Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here,
Eschew plain-speaking: 'tis a trick I keep.
Wentworth. How, when, where, Savile, Vane, and Holland speak,
Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,
All of my scorn, sir . . .
Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts

Claim somewhat?
Wentworth. Keep your thoughts! believe the King
Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes
And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,
That I am discontented with the King!
Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.
Wentworth. Like me?
Pym. I care not much
For titles: our friend Eliot died no lord,
Hampden's no lord, and Savile is a lord;
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,
The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,
The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the movingest!
Console yourself: I've borne him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,
Words moving in their way: he'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.
Wentworth. False, sir! Who showed them you? Suppose it so,
The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad
When it was shown me: I refused, the first!
John Pym, you were my friend — forbear me once!
Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this!
Wentworth. Leave me!
Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you?
Wentworth. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this!

Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,
Because I hope in you — yes, Wentworth, you
Who never mean to ruin England — you
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream
In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,
And Hampden's friend!
This is the proudest day!
Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the King!
The rough old room will seem itself again!
We'll both go in together: you've not seen
Hampden so long: come: and there's Fiennes: you'll have
To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!
[*The* KING *enters.* WENTWORTH *lets fall* PYM'S *hand.*

Charles. Arrived, my lord? — This gentleman, we know
Was your old friend.
The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.
[PYM *goes out.*
You have made haste, my lord.

Wentworth. Sir, I am come . . .

Charles. To see an old familiar — nay, 'tis well;
Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League
And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
That they intrigue with France: the Faction too,
Whereof your friend there is the head and front,
Abets them, — as he boasted, very like.

Wentworth. Sir, trust me! but for this once, trust me, sir!

Charles. What can you mean?

Wentworth. That you should trust me, sir!
Oh — not for my sake! but 'tis sad, so sad

That for distrusting me, you suffer — you
Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you think
That I would die to serve you?
Charles. But rise, Wentworth!
Wentworth. What shall convince you? What does Savile do
To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart
And show it, how sincere a thing it is!
Charles. Have I not trusted you?
Wentworth. Say aught but that!
There is my comfort, mark you: all will be
So different when you trust me — as you shall!
It has not been your fault, — I was away,
Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know?
I am here, now — he means to trust me, now —
All will go on so well!
Charles. Be sure I do —
I've heard that I should trust you: as you came,
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .
Wentworth. No, — hear nothing —
Be told nothing about me! — you're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you!
Charles. You love me, Wentworth: rise!
Wentworth. I can speak now.
I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I
Can save you: only I. Sir, what must be?
Charles. Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)
— Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .
Wentworth. That is, he'll have a war: what's done is done!
Charles. They have intrigued with France; that's clear to Laud.
Wentworth. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
The war's expense?
Charles. He'd not decide so far

Until you joined us.

Wentworth. Most considerate!
He's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots?
The People would be with us.

Charles. Pym should know.

Wentworth. The People for us — were the People for us!
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust:
Summon a Parliament! in Ireland first,
Then, here.

Charles. In truth?

Wentworth. That saves us! that puts off
The war, gives time to right their grievances —
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, — Laud
So styles it, — tutors Scotland: all their plans
Suppose no Parliament: in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs
Of Scotland's treason; then bid England help:
Even Pym will not refuse.

Charles. You would begin
With Ireland?

Wentworth. Take no care for that: that's sure
To prosper.

Charles. You shall rule me. You were best
Return at once: but take this ere you go!
Now, do I trust you? You're an Earl: my Friend
Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me not!

Wentworth. Say it all o'er again — but once again:
The first was for the music: once again!

Charles. Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,
Vain rumors. Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze
So earnestly?

Wentworth. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?

Charles. Ireland,
The Parliament, —
Wentworth. I may go when I will?
— Now?
Charles. Are you tired so soon of us?
Wentworth. My King!
But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament? I'd serve you any way.
Charles. You said just now this was the only way.
Wentworth. Sir, I will serve you.
Charles. Strafford, spare yourself:
You are so sick, they tell me.
Wentworth. 'Tis my soul
That's well and prospers now.
This Parliament —
We'll summon it, the English one — I'll care
For everything. You shall not need them much.
Charles. If they prove restive . . .
Wentworth. I shall be with you.
Charles. Ere they assemble?
Wentworth. I will come, or else
Deposit this infirm humanity
I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King! [*As* WENTWORTH *goes out, the* QUEEN *enters.*
Charles. That man must love me.
Queen. Is it over then?
Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well,
At least we shall not hear eternally
Of service — services: he's paid at least.
Charles. Not done with: he engages to surpass
All yet performed in Ireland.
Queen. I had thought
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.
The war, Charles — will he raise supplies enough?

Charles. We've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is,
I have advised . . . we have decided on
The calling — in Ireland — of a Parliament.
Queen. O truly! You agree to that? Is that
The first fruit of his counsel? But I guessed
As much.
Charles. This is too idle, Henriette!
I should know best. He will strain every nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .
Queen. Notice
How sure he is of a long term of favor!
He'll see the next, and the next after that;
No end to Parliaments!
Charles. Well, it is done.
He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,
The Commons here . . .
Queen. Here! you will summon them
Here? Would I were in France again to see
A King!
Charles. But, Henriette . . .
Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!
Why should they bear your rule?
Charles. But listen, sweet!
Queen. Let Wentworth listen — you confide in him!
Charles. I do not, love, — I do not so confide!
The Parliament shall never trouble us
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we'll buy
The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's counsel
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
To have excuse for breaking it for ever,
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?
Come, dearest! — look, the little fairy, now,
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

In the second act, the historical episode, which pervades the act is the assembling and the dissolution of the Short Parliament. Only the salient points of the political situation have been seized upon by Browning. As in the first act, the popular party in private conclave is introduced. From the talk it is gathered that feeling runs high against Strafford, by whose advice the Parliament had been called, because of the exorbitant demands made upon it for money to support an army, this army to crush Scotland whose cause was so nearly like its own. The popular party or the Faction had supposed the Parliament would be a means for the redressing of its long list of grievances which had been accumulating during the years since the last Parliament had been held. Instead of that the Commons was deliberately informed by Charles that there would be no discussions of its demands until it had granted the subsidies for which it had been asked. The play gives one a much more lively sense of the indignant feelings of the duped men than can possibly be gained by reading many more pages of history with its endless minor details. Upon this gathering, Pym suddenly enters again, and to the reproaches of him for his belief in Strafford, makes the reply that the Parliament

has been dissolved, the King has cast Strafford off forever, and henceforth Strafford will be on their side, — a conclusion not warranted by history, and, of course, found out to be erroneous by Pym and his followers in the next scene. Again there is the dramatic need to emphasize the human side of life even in an essentially political play, by showing that Pym's friendship and loyalty to Wentworth were no uncertain elements in his character. The moment it could be proved beyond a doubt that Wentworth was in the eyes of Pym, England's enemy, that moment Pym knew it would become his painful duty to crush Wentworth utterly, therefore Pym had for his own conscience' sake to make the uttermost trial of his faith.

The second scene, as in the first act, brings out the other side. It is in the main true to history though much condensed. History relates that after the Short Parliament was dissolved, "voices were raised at Whitehall in condemnation of Strafford." His policy of raising subsidies from the Parliament having failed, criticisms would, of course, be made upon his having pushed ahead a war without the proper means of sustaining it. Charles himself was also frightened by the manifestations of popular discontent and failed to uphold Wentworth in his policy.

Northumberland had been appointed commander-in-chief of the army, but besides having little heart for an enterprise so badly prepared for, he was ill in bed and could not take command of the army, so the King appointed Strafford in his place. A hint of Strafford as he appears in this scene may be taken from Clarendon who writes "The earl of Strafford was scarce recovered from a great sickness, yet was willing to undertake the charge out of pure indignation to see how few men were forward to serve the King with that vigor of mind they ought to do; but knowing well the malicious designs which were contrived against himself, he would rather serve as lieutenant-general under the earl of Northumberland, than that he should resign his commission: and so, with and under that qualification, he made all possible haste towards the north before he had strength enough for the journey." Browning makes the King tell Strafford in this interview that he has dissolved the Parliament. He represents Strafford as horrified by the news and driven in this extremity to suggest the desperate measure of debasing the coinage as a means of obtaining funds. Strafford actually counseled this, when all else failed, namely, the proposed loan from the city, and one from the Spanish govern-

ment, but, according to history, he himself voted for the dissolution of Parliament, though the play is accurate in laying the necessity of the dissolution at the door of old Vane. It was truly his ill-judged vehemence, for, not able to brook the arguments of the Commons, "He rose," says Gardiner, "to state that the King would accept nothing less than the twelve subsidies which he had demanded in his message. Upon this the Committee broke up without coming to a resolution, postponing further consideration of the matter to the following day." The next morning the King who had called his councillors together early "announced his intention of proceeding to a dissolution. Strafford, who arrived late, begged that the question might first be seriously discussed, and that the opinions of the Councillors, who were also members of the Lower House, might first be heard. Vane declared that there was no hope that the Commons 'would give one penny.' On this the votes were taken. Northumberland and Holland were alone in wishing to avert a dissolution. Supported by the rest of the Council the King hurried to the House of Lords and dissolved Parliament."

Wholly imaginary is the episode in this scene where Pym and his followers break in upon

the interview of Wentworth and the King. Just at the climax of Wentworth's sorrowful rage at the King's treatment of him, they come to claim Wentworth for their side.

That you would say I did advise the war;
And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,
These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,
You will not step between the raging People
And me, to say . . .
I knew it! from the first
I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!
Remember that I said it — that I never
Believed you for a moment!
— And, you loved me?
You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
Because I could not share the whisperings
With Vane, with Savile? What, the face was masked?
I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,
But heart of stone — of smooth cold frightful stone!
Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots
Goaded to madness? Or the English — Pym —
Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think
I'll leave them in the dark about it all?
They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, *enter.*

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favored with your gracious countenance
What shall a rebel League avail against
Your servant, utterly and ever yours?
So, gentlemen, the King's not even left
The privilege of bidding me farewell

Who haste to save the People — that you style
Your People — from the mercies of the Scots
And France their friend?
[*To* CHARLES.] Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed
Upon you, sir!
Your pleasure, gentlemen?
Hampden. The King dissolved us — 'tis the King we seek
And not Lord Strafford.
Strafford. — Strafford, guilty too
Of counselling the measure. [*To* CHARLES]. (Hush . . .
you know —
You have forgotten — sir, I counselled it)
A heinous matter, truly! But the King
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so!) — he blames.
Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:
I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
Then yelp at me!
Meanwhile, your Majesty
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .
[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell,* STRAFFORD *conducts* CHARLES *to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to* PYM, *who has not changed his original posture of surprise.*
Hampden. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!
Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come out of this unworthy place
To our old room again! He's gone.
[STRAFFORD, *just about to follow the* KING, *looks back.*
Pym. Not gone!
[*To* STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst! the old appointment's made anew:

Forget not we shall meet again!
Strafford. So be it!
And if an army follows me?
Vane. His friends
Will entertain your army!
Pym. I'll not say
You have misreckoned, Strafford: time shows.
Perish
Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat!
What share have I in it? Do I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?
Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you! [PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc., go out.*
Strafford. Pym, we shall meet again!

In the final talk of this scene with Carlisle, the pathos of Strafford's position is wonderfully brought out — the man who loves his King so overmuch that no perfidy on the King's part can make his resolution to serve him waver for an instant.

Lady CARLISLE *enters.*

You here, child?
Lady Carlisle. Hush —
I know it all: hush, Strafford!
Strafford. Ah? you know?
Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!
All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
Under the best of auspices; 'tis morn,

The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
(He's always very young) — the trumpets sound,
Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him —
You need not turn a page of the romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed,
We've the fair Lady here; but she apart, —
A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All's one:
Let us go forth!

Lady Carlisle. Go forth?

Strafford. What matters it?
We shall die gloriously — as the book says.

Lady Carlisle. To Scotland? Not to Scotland?

Strafford. Am I sick
Like your good brother, brave Northumberland?
Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford,
The wind that saps these walls can undermine
Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind?
Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym? Old Vane
Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer
Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.
— You do not listen!

Strafford. Oh, — I give that up!
There's fate in it: I give all here quite up.
Care not what old Vane does or Holland does
Against me! 'Tis so idle to withstand!
In no case tell me what they do!

Lady Carlisle. But, Strafford . . .

Strafford. I want a little strife, beside; real strife;
This petty palace-warfare does me harm:
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.
Lady Carlisle. Why do you smile?
Strafford. I got to fear them, child!
I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!
I often found it on my lips to say
"Do not traduce me to her!"
Lady Carlisle. But the King . . .
Strafford. The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,
— There; and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend
"Of friends!" — My King! I would have . . .
Lady Carlisle. . . . Died for him?
Strafford. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.
Lady Carlisle. But go not, Strafford! But you must renounce
This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?
Charles never loved you.
Strafford. And he never will.
He's not of those who care the more for men
That they're unfortunate.
Lady Carlisle. Then wherefore die
For such a master?
Strafford. You that told me first
How good he was — when I must leave true friends
To find a truer friend! — that drew me here
From Ireland, — "I had but to show myself
And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest" —
You, child, to ask me this?
Lady Carlisle. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)
Then, friend,

I shall not see you any more.
Strafford. Yes, Lucy.
There's one man here I have to meet.
Lady Carlisle. (The King!
What way to save him from the King?
My soul —
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise
Which clothes the King — he shall behold my soul!)
Strafford, — I shall speak best if you'll not gaze
Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,
To speak, but you would perish too, so sure!
Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my friend,
One image stamped within you, turning blank
The else imperial brillance of your mind, —
A weakness, but most precious, — like a flaw
I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face
Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest nature lose her gracious thought for ever!
Strafford. When could it be? no! Yet . . . was it the day
We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber?
Lady Carlisle. What?
Strafford — That I
Described to you my love for Charles?
Lady Carlisle (Ah, no —
One must not lure him from a love like that!
Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past.
I shall not serve him worse for that one brief
And passionate hope, silent for ever now!)
And you are really bound for Scotland then?
I wish you well: you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
Will not be idle — setting Vane aside!
Strafford. If Pym is busy, — you way write of Pym.

Lady Carlisle. What need, since there's your King to take
your part?
He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym —
Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .
Strafford. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!
Lady Carlisle. Is that to ask
A curl of me?
Strafford. Scotland —— the weary way!
Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me fasten it.
— A rival's, Strafford?
Strafford [*showing the George*]. He hung it there: twine
yours around it, child!
Lady Carlisle. No — no — another time — I trifle so!
And there's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court
Is dull; do something to enliven us
In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.
Strafford. I shall not fail in Scotland.
Lady Carlisle. Prosper — if
You'll think of me sometimes!
Strafford. How think of him
And not of you? of you, the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its
last streak
The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*
Strafford. That voice of hers —
You'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice
Is soft too.
Only God can save him now.
Be Thou about his bed, about his path!
His path! Where's England's path? Diverging wide,
And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow — whither? All that forlorn way

Among the tombs! Far — far — till . . . What, they do
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,
There's — Pym to face!
Why then, I have a foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last
Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,
And shall the King want Strafford at his need?
Am I not here?
Not in the market-place,
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They lie down
Hungry yet smile "Why, it must end some day:
Is he not watching for our sake?" Not there!
But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,
The . . .
Curse nothing to-night! Only one name
They'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose fault?
Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them — supplant them so,
Until you love the man and not the king ——
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
Which send me forth.
— To breast the bloody sea
That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.
Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

During the third act, the long Parliament is in session, and Pym is making his great speech impeaching Wentworth.

The conditions of affairs at the time of this Parliament were well-nigh desperate for Charles and Wentworth. Things had not gone well

with the Scottish war and Wentworth was falling more and more into disfavor. England was now threatened with a Scottish invasion. Still, even with this danger to face it was impossible to raise money to support the army. The English had a suspicion that the Scotch cause was their own. The universal demand for a Parliament could no longer be ignored; the king, therefore, summoned it to meet on the third of November. As Firth observes, "To Strafford this meant ruin, but he hardly realized the greatness of the danger in which he stood. On October 8, the Scotch Commissioners in a public paper denounced him as an incendiary, and declared that they meant to insist on his punishment.

"As soon as the Parliament opened Charles discovered that it was necessary for his service to have Strafford again by his side, and summoned him to London. There is evidence that his friends urged him to pass over to Ireland where the army rested at his devotion, or to transport himself to foreign Kingdoms till fairer weather here should invite him home. The Marquis of Hamilton advised him to fly, but as Hamilton told the King, the Earl was too great-hearted to fear. Though conscious of the peril of obedience, he set out to London to stand by his Master."

The enmity of the Court party to Strafford is touched upon in the first scene, and in the second, Strafford's return, unsuspecting of the great blow that awaits him. He had indeed meditated a blow on his own part. According to Firth, he felt that "One desperate resource remained. The intrigues of the parliamentary leaders with the Scots had come to Strafford's knowledge, and he had determined to impeach them of high treason. He could prove that Pym and his friends had secretly communicated with the rebels, and invited them to bring a Scottish army into England. Strafford arrived in London on Monday, November 9, 1640, and spent Tuesday in resting after his journey. On the morning of Wednesday the 11th, he took his seat in the House of Lords, but did not strike the blow." Upon that day he was impeached of high treason by Pym. Gardiner's account here has much the same dramatic force as the play.

"Followed by a crowd of approving members, Pym carried up the message. Whilst the Lords were still debating on this unusual request for imprisonment before the charge had been set forth, the news of the impeachment was carried to Strafford. 'I will go,' he proudly said 'and look my accusers in the

face.' With haughty mien and scowling brow he strode up the floor of the House to his place of honor. There were those amongst the Peers who had no wish to allow him to speak, lest he should accuse them of complicity with the Scots. The Lords, as a body, felt even more personally aggrieved by his method of government than the Commons. Shouts of 'Withdraw! withdraw!' rose from every side. As soon as he was gone an order was passed sequestering the Lord-Lieutenant from his place in the House and committing him to the custody of the Gentleman Usher. He was then called in and bidden to kneel whilst the order was read. He asked permission to speak, but his request was sternly refused. Maxwell, the Usher of the Black Rod, took from him his sword, and conducted him out of the House. The crowd outside gazed pitilessly on the fallen minister, 'No man capping to him, before whom that morning the greatest in England would have stood dis-covered.' 'What is the matter?' they asked. 'A small matter, I warrant you,' replied Strafford with forced levity. 'Yes, indeed,' answered a bystander, 'high treason is a small matter.'"

This passage brings up the scene in a manner so similar to that of the play, it is safe to say that Gardiner was here influ-

enced by Browning, the history having been written many years after the play.

SCENE II. — *Whitehall.*

The QUEEN *and* Lady CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.
Lady Carlisle. It is so.
Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.
Lady Carlisle. They met for that.
Queen. No, no!
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'Tis a jest.
Lady Carlisle. A bitter one.
Queen. Consider! 'Tis the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances:
They have their grievances to busy them.
Lady Carlisle. Pym has begun his speech.
Queen. Where's Vane? — That is,
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
His Presidency; he's at York, we know,
Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?
Lady Carlisle. Because the King sent for him.
Queen. Ah — but if
The King did send for him, he let him know
We had been forced to call a Parliament —
A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
Was vehement against.
Lady Carlisle. The policy
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments

To earth, then setting them upon their feet
And giving them a sword: but this is idle.
Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.
Queen. And what am I to do?
Lady Carlisle. What do? Fail, madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,
So it but stand on record that you made
An effort, only one?
Queen. The King away
At Theobald's!
Lady Carlisle. Send for him at once: he must
Dissolve the House.
Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
Of the report: then . . .
Lady Carlisle. — It will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm
And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE *enters.*

Vane. The Commons, madam,
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,
No lack of noise; but nothing, I should guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. You hear?
Lady Carlisle. I do not hear
That the King's sent for!
Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

HOLLAND *enters.*

Queen. The last news, Holland?
Holland. Pym
Is raging like a fire. The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall

And force the King to give up Strafford.

Queen. Strafford?

Holland. If they content themselves with Strafford! Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too.
Pym has not left out one of them — I would
You heard Pym raging!

Queen. Vane, go find the King!
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE *enters.*

Savile. Not to Whitehall —
'Tis to the Lords they go: they seek redress
On Strafford from his peers — the legal way,
They call it.

Queen. (Wait, Vane!)

Savile. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save
Himself so readily: at York, remember,
In his own country: what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.

Queen. Lucy, he will not come!

Lady Carlisle. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.

Vane. Oh doubtless!
And bring destruction with him: that's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him! What's the result?
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help, —
What came of it? In my poor mind, a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.

Lady Carlisle. A fright?

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. [*To the* QUEEN.] You will not save him
then?
Savile. When something like a charge is made, the King
Will best know how to save him: and t'is clear,
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
The King may reap advantage: this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints!
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. If we dissolve them, who
will pay the army?
Protect us from the insolent Scots?
Lady Carlisle. In truth,
I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
Me little: you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.
Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge — (Strafford's revengeful) — than he'll have
Against his old friend Pym.
Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym!
Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.
Holland. He'll keep at York:
All will blow over: he'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place
Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

Queen. You here! STRAFFORD *enters.*

Strafford. The King sends for me, madam.
Queen. Sir,
The King . . .
Strafford. An urgent matter that imports the King!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now,
That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me? They do not speak!
Lady Carlisle. 'Tis welcome!
For we are proud of you — happy and proud
To have you with us, Strafford! You were staunch
At Durham: you did well there! Had you not
Been stayed, you might have . . . we said, even now,
Our hope's in you!
Vane [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. The Queen would speak with you.
Strafford. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King?
Savile. An urgent matter?
Strafford. None that touches you,
Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous
Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots —
You would go free, at least! (They half divine
My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?
The service I would render, much concerns
His welfare.
Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may . . .
Strafford. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.
Queen [*who has been conversing with* VANE *and* HOLLAND]. The King will see you, sir!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Mark me: Pym's worst
Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,

Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
Let us not seem instructed! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye. [*To* STRAFFORD.] His Majesty
Has much to say with you.
Strafford. Time fleeting, too!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] No means of getting them away? And She —
What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?
What does she think of it? Get them away!
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. He comes to baffle Pym — he thinks the danger
Far off: tell him no word of it! a time
For help will come; we'll not be wanting then.
Keep him in play, Lucy — you, self-possessed
And calm! [*To* STRAFFORD.] To spare your lordship some delay
I will myself acquaint the King. [*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Beware!
[*The* QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, *and* SAVILE *go out.*
Strafford. She knows it?
Lady Carlisle. Tell me, Strafford!
Strafford. Afterward!
This moment's the great moment of all time.
She knows my purpose?
Lady Carlisle. Thoroughly: just now
She bade me hide it from you.
Strafford. Quick, dear child,
The whole o' the scheme?
Lady Carlisle. (Ah, he would learn if they
Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but
Have once apprised the King! But there's no time
For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.

Strafford. Known and approved?
Lady Carlisle. Hardly discountenanced.
Strafford. And the King — say, the King consents as well?
Lady Carlisle. The King's not yet informed, but will not dare
To interpose.
Strafford. What need to wait him, then?
He'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!
It vexed me to the soul — this waiting here.
You know him, there's no counting on the King.
Tell him I waited long!
Lady Carlisle. (What can he mean?
Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)
Strafford. I knew
They would be glad of it, — all over once,
I knew they would be glad: but he'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making.
Lady Carlisle. (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford,
You were not wont to look so happy.
Strafford. Sweet,
I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach
My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
And would have fought the Scots: the King at once
Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
For Charles, but never to obey him more!
While he endured their insolence at Ripon
I fell on them at Durham. But you'll tell
The King I waited? All the anteroom
Is filled with my adherents.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford — Strafford,

What daring act is this you hint?
Strafford. No, no!
'Tis here, not daring if you knew? all here!
[*Drawing papers from his breast.*
Full proof, see, ample proof — does the Queen know
I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex,
Brooke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?
The simper that I spoilt?), Saye, Mandeville —
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!
Lady Carlisle. Great heaven!
Strafford. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
And his losels, crushed! — Pym shall not ward the blow
Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew
And the Cabal — I crush them!
Lady Carlisle. And you go —
Strafford, — and now you go? —
Strafford. — About no work
In the background, I promise you! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
Mainwaring!
Lady Carlisle. Stay — stay, Strafford!
Strafford. She'll return,
The Queen — some little project of her own!
No time to lose: the King takes fright perhaps.
Lady Carlisle. Pym's strong, remember!
Strafford. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head — with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis: one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!
[*Many of his* Adherents *enter.*
The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots' war; my visit's opportune.
When all is over, Bryan, you proceed

To Ireland: these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond:
We want the army here — my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time! no matter,
We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no — you!
You, friend, make haste to York: bear this, at once . . .
Or, — better stay for form's sake, see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser knaves,
Take care there's no escaping at backdoors:
I'll not have one escape, mind me — not one!
I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
What these men dare!

Lady Carlisle. It is so much they dare!

Strafford. I proved that long ago; my turn is now.
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens!
Observe who harbors any of the brood
That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
Our coffers are but lean.
And you, child, too,
Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
Laud will not be the slowest in thy praise:
"Thorough" he'll cry! — Foolish, to be so glad!
This life is gay and glowing, after all:
'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
Is worth the living for.

Lady Carlisle. That reddening brow!
You seem . . .

Strafford. Well — do I not? I would be well —
I could not but be well on such a day!
And, this day ended, 'tis of slight import

How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
In Strafford.
Lady Carlisle. Noble Strafford!
Strafford. No farewell!
I'll see you anon, to-morrow — the first thing.
— If She should come to stay me!
Lady Carlisle. Go — 'tis nothing —
Only my heart that swells: it has been thus
Ere now: go, Strafford!
Strafford. To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him: you, the next after Him.
I'll tell how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
"My friend of friends!"
[STRAFFORD *and the rest go out.*
Lady Carlisle. The King — ever the King!
No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him — one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe!
Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no —
He would not look so joyous — I'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III. — *The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents *of* STRAFFORD, *etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians. — 1. I tell you he struck Maxwell: Maxwell sought

To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed on.
2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance
Before these rufflers.
3. Strafford here the first,
With the great army at his back!
4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste: that's Bryan, hush —
The gallant pointing.
Strafford's Followers. — 1. Mark these worthies, now!
2. A goodly gathering! "Where the carcass is
There shall the eagles" — what's the rest?
3. For eagles
Say crows.
A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!
One of Strafford's Followers. Are we in Geneva?
A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland; we have leave to breathe.
One of Strafford's Followers. Truly? Behold how privileged we be
That serve "King Pym"! There's Some-one at Whitehall
Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .
The Presbyterian. Nearer.
A Follower of Strafford. Higher,
We look to see him. [*To his* Companions.] I'm to have St. John
In charge; was he among the knaves just now
That followed Pym within there?
Another. The gaunt man
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL *enters.*

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's Maxwell —

Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?
Maxwell. Gentlemen,
Stand back! a great thing passes here.
A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*] The Earl
Is at his work! [*To* M.] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!
Speak out! [*To a* Presbyterian.] Friend, I've a kindness for you! Friend,
I've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind
St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,
Not laugh?
Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!
Another. Nay, wait:
The jest will be to wait.
First. And who's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they came . . .
Came . . . just as we come!
[*A* Puritan *enters hastily and without observing* STRAFFORD'S Followers.
The Puritan. How goes on the work?
Has Pym . . .
A Follower of Strafford. The secret's out at last. Aha,
The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the first!
Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!
"King Pym has fallen!"
The Puritan. Pym?
A Strafford. Pym!
A Presbyterian. Only Pym?
Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother, not Pym only; Vane as well,
Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well!
A Presbyterian. My mind misgives: can it be true?

Another. Lost! Lost!
A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?
The Puritan. Pride before destruction,
A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.
Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now! The very thing! A word in season!
A golden apple in a silver picture,
To greet Pym as he passes!

[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*

Maxwell. Stand back, all!
Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym! And I!
Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!
He comes! Quick!
The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased!
The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!
The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote
The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
That ruled the nations in his anger — he
Is persecuted and none hindreth!

[*The doors open, and* STRAFFORD *issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of* "Void the House!"

Strafford. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed — Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . .
God!
Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart — which beats!
Which beats! Some one word — "Traitor," did he say,
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?
Maxwell. In the Commons' name, their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Strafford. What did you say?
Maxwell. The Commons bid me ask your lordship's sword.
Strafford. Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!
Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.
On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!
[*The* Presbyterians *prepare to dispute his passage.*
Strafford. I stay: the King himself shall see me here.
Your tablets, fellow!
[*To* MAINWARING.] Give that to the King!
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!
Nay, you shall take my sword!
[MAXWELL *advances to take it.*
Or, no — not that!
Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
All up to that — not that! Why, friend, you see
When the King lays your head beneath my foot
It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!
Maxwell. I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!
Strafford. This gentle Maxwell! — Do not touch him, Bryan!
[*To the* Presbyterians.] Whichever cur of you will carry this
Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?
None?
[*Cries from within of* "STRAFFORD!"
Slingsby, I've loved you at least: make haste!
Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.
You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring, you then!
Is it because I spoke so hastily
At Allerton? The King had vexed me.
[*To the* Presbyterians.] You!
— Not even you? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads, you know!
But what if I can't live this minute through?
Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!
[*Louder cries of* "STRAFFORD!"

Westminster Hall

The King! I troubled him, stood in the way
Of his negotiations, was the one
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,
My safety guaranteed — having prepared
A Parliament — I see! And at Whitehall
The Queen was whispering with Vane — I see
The trap! [*Tearing off the George.*
I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!
[*His own* Adherents *disarm him. Renewed cries of* "STRAFFORD!"
England! I see thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now — Pym awaits me — pray you now!
[STRAFFORD *reaches the doors: they open wide.* HAMPDEN *and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar,* PYM *standing apart. As* STRAFFORD *kneels, the scene shuts.*

The history of the fourth act deals with further episodes of Strafford's trial, especially with the change in the procedure from Impeachment to a Bill of Attainder against Strafford. The details of this great trial are complicated and cannot be followed in all their ramifications here. There was danger that the Impeachment would not go through. Strafford, himself, felt confident that in law his actions could not be found treasonable.

After Strafford's brilliant defense of himself, it was decided to bring in a Bill of Attainder. New evidence against Strafford con-

tained in some notes which the younger Vane had found among his father's papers were used to strengthen the charge of treason. In these notes Strafford had advised the King to act "loose and absolved from all rules of government," and had reminded him that there was an army in Ireland, ready to reduce the Kingdom. These notes were found by the merest accident. The younger Vane who had just been knighted and was about to be married, borrowed his father's keys in order to look up some law papers. In his search he fell upon these notes taken at a committee that met immediately after the dissolution of the short Parliament. He made a copy and carried it to Pym who also made a copy.

According to Baillie, the "secret" of the change from the Impeachment to the Bill was "to prevent the hearing of the Earl's lawyers, who give out that there is no law yet in force whereby he can be condemned to die for aught yet objected against him, and therefore their intent by this Bill to supply the defect of the laws therein." To this may be added the opinion of a member of the Commons. "If the House of Commons proceeds to demand judgment of the Lords, without doubt they will acquit him, there being no law extant whereby to condemn him of treason.

Wherefore the Commons are determined to desert the Lord's judicature, and to proceed against him by Bill of Attainder, whereby he shall be adjudged to death upon a treason now to be declared."

One of the chief results in this change of procedure, emphasized by Browning in an intense scene between Pym and Charles was that it altered entirely the King's attitude towards Strafford's trial. As Baillie expresses it, "Had the Commons gone on in the former way of pursuit, the King might have been a patient, and only beheld the striking off of Strafford's head; but now they have put them on a Bill which will force the King either to be our agent and formal voicer to his death, or else do the world knows not what."

For the sake of a gain in dramatic power, Browning has once more departed from history by making Pym the moving power in the Bill of Attainder, and Hampden in favor of it; while in reality they were opposed to the change in procedure, and believed that the Impeachment could have been carried through.

The relentless, scourging force of Pym in the play, pursuing the arch-foe of England as he regarded Wentworth to the death, once he is convinced that England's welfare demands

it, would have been weakened had he been represented in favor of the policy which was abandoned, instead of with the policy that succeeded. But Pym is made to intimate that he will abandon the Bill unless the King gives his word that he will ratify it, and further, Pym declares, should he not ratify the Bill his next step will be against the King himself.

Enter HAMPDEN *and* VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save the great misguided man!
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all declaimed
Against him: you had but to breathe — he turned
Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter* PYM, *the* Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, *the* Managers *of the Trial*, FIENNES, RUDYARD, *etc.*

Rudyard. Horrible!
Till now all hearts were with you: I withdraw
For one. Too horrible! But we mistake
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away
The last spar from the drowning man.

Fiennes. He talks
With St. John of it — see, how quietly!
[*To other* Presbyterians.] You'll join us? Strafford may deserve the worst:
But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart!
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.

Vane. Consider, Pym!
Confront your Bill, your own Bill: what is it?
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge, —

No man will say the law has hold of him
On any charge; and therefore you resolve
To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met
To found one. You refer to Parliament
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass
Of half-borne-out assertions, dubious hints
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions — ay,
And wild inventions. Every man is saved
The task of fixing any single charge
On Strafford: he has but to see in him
The enemy of England.

Pym. A right scruple!
I have heard some called England's enemy
With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me!
Indeed you made me think I was your friend!
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove
That memory from me?

Pym. I absolve you, Vane.
Take you no care for aught that you have done!

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill! Reject this Bill!
He staggers through the ordeal: let him go,
Strew no fresh fire before him! Plead for us!
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears!

Hampden. England speaks louder: who are we, to play
The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?

Vane. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fiennes. And England trusts you.

Hampden. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her

She trusts him with, to his own mean account —
Who would look nobly frank at her expense!
Fiennes. I never thought it could have come to this.
Pym. But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,
With this one thought — have walked, and sat, and slept,
This thought before me. I have done such things,
Being the chosen man that should destroy
The traitor. You have taken up this thought
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way right at last.
Fiennes. Had we made out some weightier charge!
Pym. You say
That these are petty charges: can we come
To the real charge at all? There he is safe
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak
The words, but where's the power to take revenge
Upon them? We must make occasion serve, —
The oversight shall pay for the main sin
That mocks us.
Rudyard. But his unexampled course,
This Bill!
Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of precedent and custom, and at once
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford: each man lay his hand
Upon his breast, and judge!
Vane. I only see
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!

Rudyard and others. Forgive him! He would join us,
now he finds
What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,
Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford
The pardon of the Commons.
Pym. Meet him? Strafford?
Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!
And yet — the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time . . . 'Tis very sad!
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane — to-morrow?
Vane. Not before to-morrow —
So, time enough! I knew you would relent!
Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III. — *Whitehall.*

The KING.

Charles. My loyal servant! To defend himself
Thus irresistibly, — withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us!
We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the future
Must recompense the past.
She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now!
The scheme —
Carlisle's mad scheme — he'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me. 'Twas too precipitate:
Before the army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large: no matter.
Well, Carlisle?

Enter PYM.

Pym. Fear me not, sir: — my mission is to save,
This time.
Charles. To break thus on me! Unannounced!
Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.
Charles. No more
Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you.
Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People; will you hear
A word upon my own account?
Charles. Of Strafford?
(So turns the tide already? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler? — Strafford's eloquence
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.
Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take: the Trial fails.
Charles. Yes, yes:
We are aware, sir: for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.
Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule! I would learn from your own mouth
— (It is a matter much concerning me) —
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. This Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not, — I cast
Aside the measure.
Charles. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill?

Pym. I can.

Charles. He is my friend, sir: I have wronged him: mark you,
Had I not wronged him, this might be. You think
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,
We know you hate him) — no one else could love
Strafford: but he has saved me, some affirm.
Think of his pride! And do you know one strange,
One frightful thing? We all have used the man
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us; and yet
Strafford has wife and children, household cares,
Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause — to England if you will!

Pym. Yes — think, my soul — to England! Draw not back!

Charles. Prevent that Bill, sir! All your course seems fair
Till now. Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign
The warrant for his death! You have said much
I ponder on; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I take
The Commons' counsel; but this Bill is yours —
Nor worthy of its leader: care not, sir,
For that, however! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied?

Pym. Listen to me, sir! Eliot laid his hand,
Wasted and white, upon my forehead once;
Wentworth — he's gone now! — has talked on, whole nights,
And I beside him; Hampden loves me: sir,
How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well?

Charles. I thank you, sir, who leave

That King his servant. Thanks, sir!
Pym. Let me speak!
— Who may not speak again; whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day:
— Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.
I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man —
I might say something, warn you, pray you, save —
Mark me, King Charles, save —— you!
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir —
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved
— "How long the Many must endure the One,"
Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere!
Or ——
Charles. God forsakes me. I am in a net
And cannot move. Let all be as you say!

Enter Lady Carlisle.

Lady Carlisle. He loves you — looking beautiful with joy
Because you sent me! he would spare you all
The pain! he never dreamed you would forsake
Your servant in the evil day — nay, see
Your scheme returned! That generous heart of his!
He needs it not — or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you — you, sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .
[*Seeing* Pym.] Well met!
No fear for Strafford! All that's true and brave
On your own side shall help us: we are now
Stronger than ever.

Ha — what, sir, is this?
All is not well! What parchment have you there?
Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.
Lady Carlisle. This Bill! Your lip
Whitens — you could not read one line to me
Your voice would falter so!
Pym. No recreant yet!
The great word went from England to my soul,
And I arose. The end is very near.
Lady Carlisle. I am to save him! All have shrunk beside;
'Tis only I am left. Heaven will make strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let both die!

In the last act Browning has drawn upon his imagination more than in any other part of the play. Strafford in prison in the Tower is the center around which all the other elements of the drama are made to revolve. A glimpse, the first, of the man in a purely human capacity is given in the second scene with Strafford and his children. From all accounts little Anne was a precocious child and Browning has sketched her accordingly. The scene is like a gleam of sunshine in the gathering gloom.

The genuine grief felt by the historical Charles over the part he played in the ruin of Strafford is brought out in an interview between Strafford and Charles, who is represented as coming disguised to the prison. Strafford who has been hoping for pardon

from the King learns from Hollis, in the King's presence, that the King has signed his death warrant. He receives this shock with the remark which history attributes to him.

> "Put not your trust
> In princes, neither in the sons of men,
> In whom is no salvation!"

History tells us of two efforts to rescue Strafford. One of these was an attempt to bribe Balfour to allow him to escape from the tower. This hint the Poet has worked up into the episode of Charles, calling Balfour and begging him to go at once to Parliament, to say he will grant all demands, and that he chooses to pardon Strafford. History, however, does not say that Lady Carlisle was implicated in any plan for the rescue of Strafford, of which Browning makes so much. According to Gardiner, she was by this time bestowing her favors upon Pym. Devotion to the truth here on Browning's part would have completely ruined the inner unity of the play. Carlisle, the woman ready to devote herself to Strafford's utmost need, while Strafford is more or less indifferent to her is the artistic compliment of Strafford the man devoted to the unresponsive King. The failure of the escape through Pym's intervention is a

final dramatic climax bringing face to face not so much the two individual men as the two principles of government for which England was warring, the Monarchical and the Parliamentary. To the last, Strafford is loyal to the King and the Kingly idea, while Pym crushing his human feelings under foot, calmly contemplates the sacrifice not only of Strafford, but even of the King, if England's need demand it.

In this supreme moment of agony when Strafford and Pym meet face to face both men are made to realize an abiding love for each other beneath all their earthly differences. "A great poet of our own day," writes Gardiner, "clothing the reconciling spirit of the nineteenth century in words which never could have been spoken in the seventeenth, has breathed a high wish. On his page an imaginary Pym, recalling an imaginary friendship, looks forward hopefully to a reunion in a better and brighter world."

SCENE II. — *The Tower.*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his* Children. *They sing.*

O bell 'andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

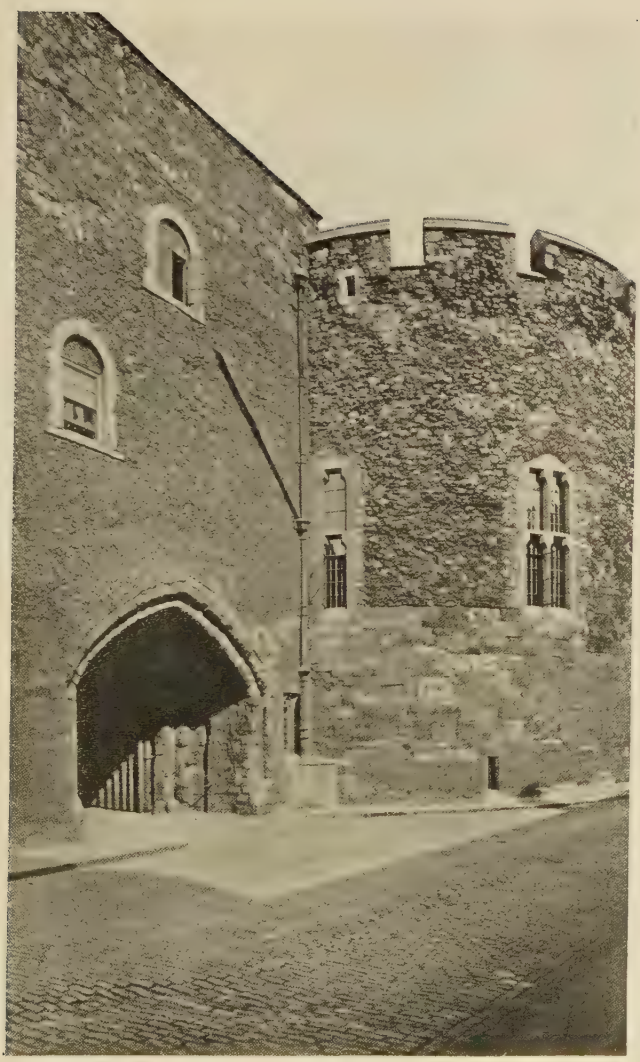
William. The boat's in the broad moonlight all this while —

Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
Into the shadowy distance; only still
You hear the dipping oar —

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all's quite gone,
Music and light and all, like a lost star.
Anne. But you should sleep, father; you were to sleep.
Strafford. I do sleep, Anne; or if not — you must know
There's such a thing as . . .
William. You're too tired to sleep?
Strafford. It will come by-and-by and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of:
We sleep safe there.
Anne. Why not in Ireland?
Strafford. No!
Too many dreams! — That song's for Venice, William:
You know how Venice looks upon the map —
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?
William. You've been to Venice, father?
Strafford. I was young, then.
William. A city with no King; that's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice.
Strafford. William!
William. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?
But I'll see Venice for myself one day.
Strafford. See many lands, boy — England last of all, —
That way you'll love her best.



The Tower, London

William. Why do men say
You sought to ruin her then?
Strafford. Ah, — they say that.
William. Why?
Strafford. I suppose they must have words to say,
As you to sing.
Anne. But they make songs beside:
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names!
William. Don't mind her, father!
They soon left off when I cried out to them.
Strafford. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!
'Tis not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?
William. Why, not the King.
Strafford. Well: it has been the fate
Of better; and yet, — wherefore not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again, —
That Time will do me right?
Anne. (Shall we sing, William?
He does not look thus when we sing.)
Strafford. For Ireland,
Something is done: too little, but enough
To show what might have been.
William. (I have no heart
To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)
Strafford. Forsook them! What, the common songs will run
That I forsook the People? Nothing more?
Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves

Noisy to be enrolled, — will register
The curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name —
The Partiot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!

[*The* Children *resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter Hollis *and an* Attendant.

Strafford. No, — Hollis? in good time! — Who is he?
Hollis. One
That must be present.
Strafford. Ah — I understand.
They will not let me see poor Laud alone.
How politic! They'd use me by degrees
To solitude: and, just as you came in,
I was solicitous what life to lead
When Strafford's "not so much as Constable
In the King's service." Is there any means
To keep oneself awake? What would you do
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?
Hollis. Strafford!
Strafford. Observe, not but that Pym and you
Will find me news enough — news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
My newsman. Or, a better project now —
What if when all's consummated, and the Saints
Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly, —
What if I venture up, some day, unseen,
To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,
Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,
As, whether Strafford's name were John or James —
And be myself appealed to — I, who shall

Myself have near forgotten!

Hollis. I would speak . . .

Strafford. Then you shall speak, — not now. I want just now,
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
Is full of ghosts.

Hollis. Nay, you must hear me, Strafford!

Strafford. Oh, readily! Only, one rare thing more, —
The minister! Who will advise the King,
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
And yet have health — children, for aught I know —
My patient pair of traitors! Ah, — but, William —
Does not his cheek grow thin?

William. 'Tis you look thin, Father!

Strafford. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to-rights.

Hollis. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

Strafford. No,
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, Hollis? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's?

Hollis. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.

Strafford. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when he pleases, —
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.

Hollis. The King — I bear
His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!

Strafford. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!
[*The* Children *retire.*
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.

I know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here himself,
Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King perfers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping — bids me trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river! Give at once
His order of release! I've heard, as well
Of certain poor manœuvres to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . . Where's the order?
Hollis. Spare me!
Strafford. Why, he'd not have me steal away?
With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France, perhaps?
Hollis, 'tis for my children! 'Twas for them
I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Be patient, speak when called upon, observe
Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie!
What's in that boy of mine that he should prove
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he'll stay with me. Charles should know as much,
He too has children!
[*Turning to* Hollis's Companion.] Sir, you feel for me!
No need to hide that face! Though it have looked
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me , . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks:
For there is one who comes not.

Hollis. Whom forgive,
As one to die!
Strafford. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.
Hollis. 'Tis a world's wonder: Strafford, you must die!
Strafford. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha! Tears in truth?
We'll end this! See this paper, warm — feel — warm
With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
Whose promise? Read, and loud for God to hear!
"Strafford shall take no hurt" — read it, I say!
" In person, honor, nor estate" —
Hollis. The King . . .
Strafford. I could unking him by a breath! You sit
Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I'd renounce the King: and I stood firm
On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .
Hollis. To sign
The warrant for your death.
Strafford. "Put not your trust
In princes, neither in the sons of men,
In whom is no salvation!"
Hollis. Trust in God!
The scaffold is prepared: they wait for you:
He has consented. Cast the earth behind!
Charles. You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot!
It was wrung from me! Only, curse me not!
Hollis [*to* STRAFFORD]. As you hope grace and pardon in
your need,
Be merciful to this most wretched man.
[*Voices from within.*
Verso la sera
Di Primavera

Strafford. You'll be good to those children, sir? I know
You'll not believe her, even should the Queen
Think they take after one they rarely saw.
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters: but you are
So utterly deprived of friends! He too
Must serve you — will you not be good to him?
Or, stay, sir, do not promise — do not swear!
You, Hollis — do the best you can for me!
I've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford's dead,
And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next:
I've found small time of late for my affairs,
But I trust any of you, Pym himself —
No one could hurt them: there's an infant, too.
These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them.
Nay — pardon me, my King! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness: there escaped a peevish word —
'Tis gone: I bless you at the last. You know
All's between you and me: what has the world
To do with it? Farewell!

Charles [*at the door*]. Balfour! Balfour!

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament! — go to them: I grant all
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent:
Tell them to keep their money if they will:
I'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat: only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose!
— You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside!

Balfour. Your Majesty may hear them now:
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:

Please you retire!

Charles. Take all the troops, Balfour!

Balfour. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

Charles. Come with me, Strafford! You'll not fear, at least!

Strafford. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,
The King was sorry: 'tis no shame in him:
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!
Earth fades, heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next
Before God's throne: the moment's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave
To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death —
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved
Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent
My death! Lead on! ere he awake — best, now!
All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,
The crowd began to murmur? They'll be kept
Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
Now! But tread softly — children are at play
In the next room. Precede! I follow —

Enter Lady CARLISLE *with many* Attendants.

Lady Carlisle. Me!
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King?

[*To the* KING.] Well — as you ordered, they are ranged without,
The convoy . . . [*seeing the* KING'S *state.*]
[*To* STRAFFORD.] You know all, then! Why I thought
It looked best that the King should save you, — Charles
Alone; 'tis a shame that you should owe me aught.
Or no, not shame! Strafford, you'll not feel shame
At being saved by me?
Hollis. All true! Oh Strafford,
She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!
And is the boat in readiness? You, friend,
Are Billingsley, no doubt. Speak to her, Strafford!
See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!
The world's to learn its bravest story yet.
Lady Carlisle. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,
To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.
Strafford. You love me, child? Ah, Strafford can be loved
As well as Vane! I could escape, then?
Lady Carlisle. Haste!
Advance the torches, Bryan!
Strafford. I will die.
They call me proud: but England had no right,
When she encountered me — her strength to mine —
To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,
I fought her to the utterance, I fell,
I am her's now, and I will die. Beside,
The lookers-on! Eliot is all about
This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford!
Strafford. I think if you could know how much
I love you, you would be repaid, my friend!
Lady Carlisle. Then, for my sake!

Strafford. Even for your sweet sake,
I stay.
Hollis. For *their* sake!
Strafford. To bequeath a stain?
Leave me! Girl, humor me and let me die!
Lady Carlisle. Bid him escape — wake, King! Bid him escape!
Strafford. True, I will go! Die, and forsake the King?
I'll not draw back from the last service.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford!
Strafford. And, after all, what is disgrace to me?
Let us come, child! That it should end this way!
Lead them! but I feel strangely: it was not
To end this way.
Lady Carlisle. Lean — lean on me!
Strafford. My King!
Oh, had he trusted me — his friend of friends!
Lady Carlisle. I can support him, Hollis!
Strafford. Not this way!
This gate — I dreamed of it, this very gate.
Lady Carlisle. It opens on the river: our good boat
Is moored below, our friends are there.
Strafford. The same:
Only with something ominous and dark,
Fatal, inevitable.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford! Strafford!
Strafford. Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!
I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!
Lady Carlisle. To save the King, — Strafford, to save the King!

[*As* STRAFFORD *opens the door*, PYM *is discovered with* HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.* STRAFFORD *falls back;* PYM *follows slowly and confronts him.*

Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake
I still have labored for, with disregard
To my own heart, — for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up
Her sacrifice — this friend, this Wentworth here —
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
Would never leave him: I do leave him now.
I render up my charge (be witness, God!)
To England who imposed it. I have done
Her bidding — poorly, wrongly, — it may be,
With ill effects — for I am weak, a man:
Still, I have done my best, my human best,
Not faltering for a moment. It is done.
And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say
I never loved but one man — David not
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon:
My mission over, I shall not live long,) —
Ay, here I know I talk — I dare and must,
Of England, and her great reward, as all
I look for there; but in my inmost heart,
Believe, I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth — my youth's friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .

This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase
Too hot. A thin mist — is it blood? — enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!
Strafford. I have loved England too; we'll meet then, Pym.
As well die now! Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course:
Manhood with action follows; but 'tis dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age —
The time past, the strength gone! As well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right — not now!
Best die. Then if there's any fault, fault too
Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,
In some blind corner. And there's no one left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!
And yet, I know not: I shall not be there:
Friends fail — if he have any. And he's weak,
And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is nothing —
Nothing! But not that awful head — not that!
Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .
Strafford. Pym, you help England! I, that am to die,
What I must see! 'tis here — all here! My God,
Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell!
What? England that you help, become through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym —
Some who, without that, still must ever wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young! No word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong curse forth
Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror till
She's fit with her white face to walk the world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and you —

Then to sit down with you at the board-head,
The gathering for prayer . . . O speak, but speak!
. . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home,
You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with, — hardly moaning in his dreams.
She gnaws so quietly, — till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away!
Oh, shall you 'scape with less if she's my child?
You will not say a word — to me — to Him?

Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .

Strafford, No, not for England now, not for Heaven now, —
See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you!
There, I will thank you for the death, my friend!
This is the meeting: let me love you well!

Pym. England, — I am thine own! Dost thou exact
That service? I obey thee to the end.

Strafford. O God, I shall die first — I shall die first!

A lively picture of Cavalier sentiment is given in the "Cavalier Tunes" — which ought to furnish conclusive proof that Browning does not always put himself into his work. They may be compared with the words set to Avison's march given in the last chapter which presents just as sympathetically "Roundhead" sentiment.

I. MARCHING ALONG

I

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:

THE TOWER: TRAITORS' GATE

And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're —

CHORUS.— *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here
CHORUS.— *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHORUS.— *March we along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II. GIVE A ROUSE

I

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

II

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

CHORUS. — *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

CHORUS. — *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,
CHORUS. — "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —"
CHORUS. — "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,"
CHORUS. — "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
I've better counsellors; what counsel they?"
CHORUS. — "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

Though not illustrative of the subject in hand, "Martin Relph" is included here on account of the glimpse it gives of an episode, interesting in English History, though devoid of serious consequences, since it marked the final abortive struggle of a dying cause.

An imaginary incident of the rebellion in the time of George II., forms the background of "Martin Relph," the point of the story being the life-long agony of reproach suffered by Martin who let his envy and jealousy conquer him at a crucial moment. The history of the attempt of Charles Edward to get back the crown of England, supported by a few thousand Highlanders, of his final defeat at the Battle of Culloden, and of the decay henceforth of Jacobitism, needs no telling. The treatment of spies as herein shown is a common-place of war-times, but that a reprieve exonerating the accused should be prevented from reaching its destination in time through the jealousy of the only person who saw it coming gives the episode a tragic touch lifting it into an atmosphere of peculiar individual pathos.

MARTIN RELPH

My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when a youngster
long ago,
On a bright May day, a strange old man, with a beard as white
as snow,
Stand on the hill outside our town like a monument of woe,
And, striking his bare bald head the while, sob out the reason
— so!

If I last as long at Methuselah I shall never forgive myself:
But — God forgive me, that I pray, unhappy Martin Relph,

As coward, coward I call him — him, yes, him! Away
from me!
Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set me a-stare, all eyes,
no tongue?
People have urged "You visit a scare too hard on a lad so
young!
You were taken aback, poor boy," they urge, "no time to
regain your wits:
Besides it had maybe cost you life." Ay, there is the cap
which fits!

So, cap me, the coward, — thus! No fear! A cuff on the
brow does good:
The feel of it hinders a worm inside which bores at the brain
for food.
See now, there certainly seems excuse: for a moment, I trust,
dear friends,
The fault was but folly, no fault of mine, or if mine, I have
made amends!

For, every day that is first of May, on the hill-top, here stand I,
Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and publish the reason
why,
When there gathers a crowd to mock the fool. No fool,
friends, since the bite
Of a worm inside is worse to bear: pray God I have balked
him quite!

I'll tell you. Certainly much excuse! It came of the way
they cooped
Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close huddling because
tight-hooped

By the red-coats round us villagers all: they meant we should see the sight
And take the example, — see, not speak, for speech was the Captain's right.

"You clowns on the slope, beware!" cried he: "This woman about to die
Gives by her fate fair warning to such acquaintance as play the spy.
Henceforth who meddle with matters of state above them perhaps will learn
That peasants should stick to their plough-tail, leave to the King the King's concern.

"Here's a quarrel that sets the land on fire, between King George and his foes:
What call has a man of your kind — much less, a woman — to interpose?
Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like you, not foes — so much the worse!
The many and loyal should keep themselves unmixed with the few perverse.

"Is the counsel hard to follow? I gave it you plainly a month ago,
And where was the good? The rebels have learned just all that they need to know.
Not a month since in we quietly marched: a week, and they had the news,
From a list complete of our rank and file to a note of our caps and shoes.

"All about all we did and all we were doing and like to do!
Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture who wrote it, too.

Some of you men look black enough, but the milk-white face demure
Betokens the finger foul with ink: 'tis a woman who writes, be sure!

"Is it 'Dearie, how much I miss your mouth!' — good natural stuff, she pens?
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of course: with talk about cocks and hens,
How 'robin has built on the apple-tree, and our creeper which came to grief
Through the frost, we feared, is twining afresh round casement in famous leaf.'

"But all for a blind! She soon glides frank into 'Horrid the place is grown
With Officers here and Privates there, no nook we may call our own:
And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house, and lodging will be to seek
For the second Company sure to come ('tis whispered) on Monday week.'

"And so to the end of the chapter! There! The murder you see, was out:
Easy to guess how the change of mind in the rebels was brought about!
Safe in the trap would they now lie snug, had treachery made no sign:
But treachery meets a just reward, no matter if fools malign!

"That traitors had played us false, was proved — sent news which fell so pat:
And the murder was out — this letter of love, the sender of this sent that!

'Tis an ugly job, though, all the same — a hateful, to have
to deal
With a case of the kind, when a woman's in fault: we soldiers
need nerves of steel!

"So, I gave her a chance, despatched post-haste a message
to Vincent Parkes
Whom she wrote to; easy to find he was, since one of the King's
own clerks,
Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the town close by where
the rebels camp:
A sort of a lawyer, just the man to betray our sort — the
scamp!

"'If her writing is simple and honest and only the lover-like
stuff it looks,
And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor down in the rebels' books,
Come quick,' said I, 'and in person prove you are each of
you clear of crime,
Or martial law must take its course: this day next week's the
time!'

"Next week is now: does he come? Not he! Clean gone, our
clerk, in a trice!
He has left his sweetheart here in the lurch: no need of a
warning twice!
His own neck free, but his partner's fast in the noose still,
here she stands
To pay for her fault. 'Tis an ugly job: but soldiers obey
commands.

"And hearken wherefore I make a speech! Should any
acquaintance share
The folly that led to the fault that is now to be punished, let
fools beware!

Look black, if you please, but keep hands white: and, above
all else, keep wives —
Or sweethearts or what they may be — from ink! Not a
word now, on your lives!"

Black? but the Pit's own pitch was white to the Captain's
face — the brute
With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy nose and the blood-
shot eyes to suit!
He was muddled with wine, they say: more like, he was out
of his wits with fear;
He had but a handful of men, that's true, — a riot might cost
him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page, with pinioned arms
and face
Bandaged about, on the turf marked out for the party's firing-
place.
I hope she was wholly with God: I hope 'twas His angel
stretched a hand
To steady her so, like the shape of stone you see in our church-
aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the bandage to vex
her eyes,
No face within which she missed without, no questions and
no replies —
"Why did you leave me to die?" — "Because . . ." Oh,
fiends, too soon you grin
At merely a moment of hell, like that — such heaven as hell
ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up went the guns in a line.
Those heaped on the hill were blind as dumb, — for, of all
eyes, only mine

Looked over the heads of the foremost rank. Some fell on their knees in prayer,
Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes, with a sole exception there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last, had sidled behind the group:
I am highest of all on the hill-top, there stand fixed while the others stoop!
From head to foot in a serpent's twine am I tightened: *I* touch ground?
No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse which the fetters rust around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst — aught else but see, see, only see?
And see I do — for there comes in sight — a man, it sure must be! —
Who staggeringly, stumblingly rises, falls, rises, at random flings his weight
On and on, anyhow onward — a man that's mad he arrives too late!

Else why does he wave a something white high-flourished above his head?
Why does not he call, cry, — curse the fool! — why throw up his arms instead?
O take his fist in your own face, fool! Why does not yourself shout "Stay!
Here's a man comes rushing, might and main, with something he's mad to say?"

And a minute, only a moment, to have hell-fire boil up in your brain,

And ere you can judge things right, choose heaven, — time's over, repentance vain!
They level: a volley, a smoke and the clearing of smoke: I see no more
Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic arms, nor the something white he bore.

But stretched on the field, some half-mile off, is an object. Surely dumb,
Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody heard, not one of us saw him come!
Has he fainted through fright? One may well believe! What is it he holds so fast?
Turn him over, examine the face! Heyday! What, Vincent Parkes at last?

Dead! dead as she, by the self-same shot: one bullet has ended both,
Her in the body and him in the soul. They laugh at our plighted troth.
"Till death us do part?" Till death us do join past parting — that sounds like
Bethrothal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what need has my fist to strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed: one bound, and your soul reached hers!
There is clenched in your hand the thing, signed, sealed, the paper which plain avers
She is innocent, innocent, plain as print, with the King's Arms broad engraved:
No one can hear, but if any one high on the hill can see, she's saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with heart-break — plain it grew
How the week's delay had been brought about: each guess at the end proved true.
It was hard to get at the folk in power: such waste of time! and then
Such pleading and praying, with, all the while, his lamb in the lion's den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon out, no end to the stupid forms —
The license and leave: I make no doubt — what wonder if passion warms
The pulse in a man if you play with his heart? — he was something hasty in speech;
Anyhow, none would quicken the work: he had to beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in his grasp, — what followed but fresh delays?
For the floods were out, he was forced to take such a round-about of ways!
And 'twas "Halt there!" at every turn of the road, since he had to cross the thick
Of the red-coats: what did they care for him and his "Quick, for God's sake, quick!"

Horse? but he had one: had it how long? till the first knave smirked "You brag
Yourself a friend of the King's? then lend to a King's friend here your nag!"
Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece they plundered him still,
With their "Wait you must, — no help: if aught can help you, a guinea will!"

And a borough there was — I forget the name — whose Mayor must have the bench
Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for "Vincent," thinks he, sounds French!
It well may have driven him daft, God knows! all man can certainly know
Is — rushing and falling and rising, at last he arrived in a horror — so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have rescued both! Ay bite me! The worm begins
At his work once more. Had cowardice proved — that only — my sin of sins!
Friends, look you here! Suppose . . . suppose . . . But mad I am, needs must be!
Judas the Damned would never have dared such a sin as I dream! For, see!

Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself, my wretched self, and dreamed
In the heart of me "She were better dead than happy and his!" — while gleamed
A light from hell as I spied the pair in a perfectest embrace,
He the savior and she the saved, — bliss born of the very murder-place!

No! Say I was scared, friends! Call me fool and coward, but nothing worse!
Jeer at the fool and gibe at the coward! 'Twas ever the coward's curse
That fear breeds fancies in such: such take their shadow for substance still,
— A fiend at their back. I liked poor Parkes, — loved Vincent, if you will!

And her — why, I said "Good morrow" to her, "Good even," and nothing more:
The neighborly way! She was just to me as fifty had been before.
So, coward it is and coward shall be! There's a friend, now! Thanks! A drink
Of water I wanted: and now I can walk, get home by myself, I think.

This poem, on an incident in Clive's life, is also included on account of its English historical setting.

The remarkable career of Robert Clive cannot be gone into here. Suffice it to refresh one's memory with a few principal events of his life. He was born in Shopshire in 1725. He entered the service of the East India Company at eighteen and was sent to Madras. Here, on account of his falling into debt, and being in danger of losing his situation, he twice tried to shoot himself. The pistol failed to go off, however, and he became impressed with the idea that some great destiny was awaiting him. His feeling was fully realized as his subsequent career in India shows. At twenty-seven, when he returned to England he had made the English the first military power in India. On his return to India (1755–59) he took a further step and secured for the English a political

supremacy. Finally, on his last visit, he crowned his earlier exploits by putting the English dominance on a sounder basis of integrity than it had before been.

The incident related in the poem by the old man, Browning heard from Mrs. Jameson, who had shortly before heard it from Macaulay at Lansdowne House. Macaulay mentions it in his essay: "Of his personal courage he had, while still a writer [clerk] given signal proof by a desperate duel with a military bully who was the terror of Fort St. David."

The old gentleman in the poem evidently mixed up his dates slightly, for he says this incident occurred when Clive was twenty-one, and he represents him as committing suicide twenty-five years afterwards. Clive was actually forty-nine when he took his own life.

CLIVE

I and Clive were friends — and why not? Friends! I think you laugh, my lad.
Clive it was gave England India, while your father gives — egad,
England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him on to speak —
"Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades —" with a tongue thrust in your cheek!
Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world's eyes, Clive was man,

I was, am and ever shall be — mouse, nay, mouse of all its clan
Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen's estimate for fame;
While the man Clive — he fought Plassy, spoiled the clever foreign game,
Conquered and annexed and Englished!
Never mind! As o'er my punch
(You away) I sit of evenings, — silence, save for biscuit-crunch,
Black, unbroken, — thought grows busy, thrids each path-way of old years,
Notes this forthright, that meander, till the long-past life appears
Like an outspread map of country plodded through, each mile and rood,
Once, and well remembered still: I'm startled in my solitude
Ever and anon by — what's the sudden mocking light that breaks
On me as I slap the table till no rummer-glass but shakes
While I ask — aloud, I do believe, God help me! — "Was it thus?
Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when just one step for us —"
(Us, — you were not born, I grant, but surely some day born would be)
"— One bold step had gained a province" (figurative talk, you see)
"Got no end of wealth and honor, — yet I stood stock still no less?"
— "For I was not Clive," you comment: but it needs no Clive to guess
Wealth were handy, honor ticklish, did no writing on the wall
Warn me "Trespasser, 'ware man-traps!" Him who braves that notice — call

Hero! none of such heroics suit myself who read plain words,
Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scripture says the land's the Lord's:
Louts them — what avail the thousand, noisy in a smock-frocked ring,
All-agog to have me trespass, clear the fence, be Clive their king?
Higher warrant must you show me ere I set one foot before
T'other in that dark direction, though I stand for evermore
Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Evermore? No! By-and-by
Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive turns out less wise than I.
Don't object "Why call him friend, then?" Power is power, my boy, and still
Marks a man, — God's gift magnific, exercised for good or ill.
You've your boot now on my hearth-rug, tread what was a tiger's skin:
Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the bullet in!
True, he murdered half a village, so his own death came to pass;
Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage — ah, the brute he was!
Why, that Clive, — that youth, that greenhorn, that quill-driving clerk, in fine, —
He sustained a siege in Arcot. . . . But the world knows! Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at? How bring Clive in? Oh, you mentioned "fear"!
Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so, when the clouds, about the orb

Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely, threatened to absorb
Ray by ray its noontide brilliance, — friendship might, with steadier eye
Drawing near, bear what had burned else, now no blaze — all majesty.
Too much bee's-wing floats my figure? Well, suppose a castle's new:
None presume to climb its ramparts, none find foothold sure for shoe
'Twixt those squares and squares of granite plating the impervious pile
As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a crocodile.
Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm-dismantled? From without
Scrambling up by crack and crevice, every cockney prates about
Towers — the heap he kicks now! turrets — just the measure of his cane!
Will that do? Observe moreover — (same similitude again)—
Such a castle seldom crumbles by sheer stress of canonade:
'Tis when foes are foiled and fighting's finished that vile rains invade,
Grass o'ergrows, o'ergrows till night-birds congregating find no holes
Fit to build in like the topmost sockets made for banner-poles.
So Clive crumbled slow in London — crashed at last.

A week before,
Dining with him, — after trying churchyard-chat of days of yore, —
Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones, head-piece, foot-piece, when they lean

Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er a coffined Past
between.
As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the soul's extinguish-
ment
By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the furtive fingers went
Where a drug-box skulked behind the honest liquor, — "One
more throw
Try for Clive!" thought I: "Let's venture some good rattling
question!" So —
"Come, Clive, tell us" — out I blurted — "what to tell in
turn, years hence,
When my boy — suppose I have one — asks me on what
evidence
I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a warrior every whit
Worth your Alexanders, Cæsars, Marlboroughs and — what
said Pitt? —
Frederick the Fierce himself! Clive told me once" — I want
to say —
"Which feat out of all those famous doings bore the bell
away
— In his own calm estimation, mark you, not the mob's
rough guess —
Which stood foremost as evincing what Clive called courage-
ousness!
Come! what moment of the minute, what speck-center in the
wide
Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly deified?
(Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow bold this whole-
some Port!)
If a friend has leave to question, — when were you most brave,
in short?"

Up he arched his brows o' the instant — formidably Clive
again.

"When was I most brave? I'd answer, were the instance half as plain
As another instance that's a brain-lodged crystal — curse it! — here
Freezing when my memory touches — ugh! — the time I felt most fear.
Ugh! I cannot say for certain if I showed fear — anyhow,
Fear I felt, and, very likely, shuddered, since I shiver now."

"Fear!" smiled I. "Well, that's the rarer: that's a specimen to seek,
Ticket up in one's museum, *Mind-Freaks, Lord Clive's Fear, Unique!*"

Down his brows dropped. On the table painfully he pored as though
Tracing, in the stains and streaks there, thoughts encrusted long ago.
When he spoke 'twas like a lawyer reading word by word some will,
Some blind jungle of a statement, — beating on and on until
Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.

"This fell in my factor-days.
Desk-drudge, slaving at St. David's, one must game, or drink, or craze.
I chose gaming: and, — because your high-flown gamesters hardly take
Umbrage at a factor's elbow if the factor pays his stake, —
I was winked at in a circle where the company was choice,
Captain This and Major That, men high of color, loud of voice,
Yet indulgent, condescending to the modest juvenile

Who not merely risked but lost his hard-earned guineas with a smile.
"Down I sat to cards, one evening, — had for my antagonist
Somebody whose name's a secret — you'll know why — so, if you list,
Call him Cock o' the Walk, my scarlet son of Mars from head to heel!
Play commenced: and, whether Cocky fancied that a clerk must feel
Quite sufficient honor came of bending over one green baize,
I the scribe with him the warrior, — guessed no penman dared to raise
Shadow of objection should the honor stay but playing end
More or less abruptly, — whether disinclined he grew to spend
Practice strictly scientific on a booby born to stare
At — not ask of — lace-and-ruffles if the hand they hide plays fair, —
Anyhow, I marked a movement when he bade me 'Cut!'

"I rose.
'Such the new manœuvre, Captain? I'm a novice: knowledge grows.
What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?'

"Never did a thunder-clap
Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with Chloe in his lap,
As my word and gesture (down I flung my cards to join the pack)
Fired the man of arms, whose visage, simply red before, turned black.

When he found his voice, he stammered 'That expression once again!'

"'Well, you forced a card and cheated!'

"'Possibly a factor's brain,
Busied with his all-important balance of accounts, may deem
Weighing words superfluous trouble: *cheat* to clerkly ears may seem
Just the joke for friends to venture: but we are not friends, you see!
When a gentleman is joked with, — if he's good at repartee,
He rejoins, as do I — Sirrah, on your knees, withdraw in full!
Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet through your skull
Lets in light and teaches manners to what brain it finds! Choose quick —
Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling, pray me trim yon candle-wick!'

"'Well, you cheated!'

"Then outbroke a howl from all the friends around.
To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were clenched and teeth were ground.
End it! no time like the present! Captain, yours were our disgrace!
No delay, begin and finish! Stand back, leave the pair a space!
Let civilians be instructed: henceforth simply ply the pen,
Fly the sword! This clerk's no swordsman? Suit him with a pistol, then!
Even odds! A dozen paces 'twixt the most and least expert
Make a dwarf a giant's equal: nay, the dwarf, if he's alert,
Likelier hits the broader target!'

"Up we stood accordingly.
As they handed me the weapon, such was my soul's thirst to try
Then and there conclusions with this bully, tread on and stamp out
Every spark of his existence, that, — crept close to, curled about
By that toying tempting teasing fool-fore-finger's middle joint, —
Don't you guess? — the trigger yielded. Gone my chance! and at the point
Of such prime success moreover: scarce an inch above his head
Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was living, I was dead.

"Up he marched in flaming triumph — 'twas his right, mind! — up, within
Just an arm's length. 'Now, my clerkling,' chuckled Cocky with a grin
As the levelled piece quite touched me, 'Now, Sir Counting-House, repeat
That expression which I told you proved bad manners! Did I cheat?'

"'Cheat you did, you knew you cheated, and, this moment, know as well.
As for me, my homely breeding bids you — fire and go to Hell!'

"Twice the muzzle touched my forehead. Heavy barrel, flurried wrist,
Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then, 'Laugh at Hell who list,

I can't! God's no fable either. Did this boy's eye wink
once? No!
There's no standing him and Hell and God all three against
me, — so,
I did cheat!'

"And down he threw the pistol, out rushed
— by the door
Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chimney, roof or floor,
He effected disappearance — I'll engage no glance was sent
That way by a single starer, such a blank astonishment
Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking — mute they
stood as mice.

"Mute not long, though! Such reaction, such a hubbub in
a trice!
'Rogue and rascal! Who'd have thought it? What's to be
expected next,
When His Majesty's Commission serves a sharper as pretext
For . . . But where's the need of wasting time now? Nought
requires delay:
Punishment the Service cries for: let disgrace be wiped away
Publicly, in good broad daylight! Resignation? No, indeed
Drum and fife must play the Rogue's March, rank and file
be free to speed
Tardy marching on the rogue's part by appliance in the rear
— Kicks administered shall right this wronged civilian, —
never fear,
Mister Clive, for — though a clerk — you bore yourself —
suppose we say —
Just as would beseem a soldier!'

"'Gentlemen, attention — pray!
First, one word!'

"I passed each speaker severally in review.
When I had precise their number, names and styles, and fully knew
Over whom my supervision thenceforth must extend, — why, then ——

"'Some five minutes since, my life lay — as you all saw, gentlemen —
At the mercy of your friend there. Not a single voice was raised
In arrest of judgment, not one tongue — before my powder blazed —
Ventured "Can it be the youngster blundered, really seemed to mark
Some irregular proceeding? We conjecture in the dark,
Guess at random, — still, for sake of fair play — what if for a freak,
In a fit of absence, — such things have been! — if our friend proved weak
— What's the phrase? — corrected fortune! Look into the case, at least!"
Who dared interpose between the altar's victim and the priest?
Yet he spared me! You eleven! Whosoever, all or each,
To the disadvantage of the man who spared me, utters speech
— To his face, behind his back, — that speaker has to do with me:
Me who promise, if positions change and mine the chance should be,
Not to imitate your friend and waive advantage!'

"Twenty-five
Years ago this matter happened: and 'tis certain," added Clive,

"Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky have a single breath
Breathed against him: lips were closed throughout his life,
or since his death,
For if he be dead or living I can tell no more than you.
All I know is — Cocky had one chance more; how he used
it, — grew
Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed, and back again
Brought the late-ejected devil with a score more in his train, —
That's for you to judge. Reprieval I procured, at any rate.
Ugh — the memory of that minute's fear makes gooseflesh
rise! Why prate
Longer? You've my story, there's your instance: fear I did,
you see!"

"Well" — I hardly kept from laughing — "if I see it, thanks
must be
Wholly to your Lordship's candor. Not that — in a com-
mon case —
When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in one's face,
I should underrate, believe me, such a trial to the nerve!
'Tis no joke, at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand nor
swerve.
Fear I naturally look for — unless, of all men alive,
I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert Clive.
Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death — the whole
world knows —
Came to somewhat closer quarters."
Quarters? Had we come to blows,
Clive and I, you had not wondered — up he sprang so, out
he rapped
Such a round of oaths — no matter! I'll endeavor to adapt
To our modern usage words he — well, 'twas friendly license
— flung
At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag his tongue.

"You — a soldier? You — at Plassy? Yours the faculty to nick
Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-quick,
— At his mercy, at his malice, — has you, through some stupid inch
Undefended in your bulwark? Thus laid open, — not to flinch
— That needs courage, you'll concede me. Then, look here! Suppose the man,
Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not a span
Distant from my temple, — curse him! — quietly had bade me 'There!
Keep your life, calumniator! — worthless life I freely spare:
Mine you freely would have taken — murdered me and my good fame
Both at once — and all the better! Go, and thank your own bad aim
Which permits me to forgive you!' What if, with such words as these,
He had cast away his weapon? How should I have borne me, please?
Nay, I'll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only this, remained —
Pick his weapon up and use it on myself. I so had gained
Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on still
Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman's will."

"Such the turn," said I, "the matter takes with you? Then I abate
— No, by not one jot nor tittle, — of your act my estimate.
Fear — I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me, plain enough —
Call it desperation, madness — never mind! for here's in rough

Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome disgrace.
True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush against God's face
— None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to church at times,
Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in foreign climes
Rub some marks away — not all, though! We poor sinners reach life's brink,
Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but think
There's advantage in what's left us — ground to stand on, time to call
'Lord, have mercy!' ere we topple over — do not leap, that's all!"

Oh, he made no answer, — re-absorbed into his cloud. I caught
Something like "Yes — courage: only fools will call it fear."
If aught
Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive, in that I heard,
Next week, how your own hand dealt you doom, and uttered just the word
"Fearfully courageous!" — this, be sure, and nothing else I groaned.
I'm no Clive, nor parson either: Clive's worst deed — we'll hope condoned.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF ENGLISH LIFE

BROWNING'S poetry presents no such complete panorama of phases of social life in England as it does of those in Italy, perhaps, because there is a poise and solidity about the English character which does not lend itself to so great a variety of mood as one may find in the peculiarly artistic temperament of the Italians, especially those of the Renaissance period. Even such irregular proceedings as murders have their philosophical after-claps which show their usefulness in the divine scheme of things, while unfortunate love affairs work such beneficent results in character that they are shorn of much of their tragedy of sorrow. There is quite a group of love-lyrics with no definite setting that might be put down as English in temper. It does not require much imagination to think of the lover who sings so lofty a strain in "One Way of Love" as English: —

I

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion — heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!
Lose who may — I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

And is not this treatment of a "pretty woman" more English than not?

A PRETTY WOMAN

I

That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know —
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake,
All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV

And in turn we make you ours, we say —
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet —
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar — for you could not, Sweet!

VII

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX

As, — why must one, for the love foregone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth, — the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection —
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
— A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose, —
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals, —
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it — at last, throw away!

"The Last Ride Together" may be cited as another example of the philosophy which an Englishman, or at any rate a Browning, can evolve from a more or less painful episode.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I

I said — Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all my life seemed meant for, fails,
  Since this was written and needs must be —
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave, — I claim
Only a memory of the same,
— And this beside, if you will not blame,
  Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
  With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
  Who knows but the world may end to-night?

III

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions — sun's —
And moon's and evening-star's at once —

And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here! —
Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought, — All labor, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
  We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a stateman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
  My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
  And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
  Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII

And you, great sculptor — so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
  You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,

Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being — had I signed the bond —
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X

And yet — she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity, —
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

"James Lee's Wife" is also English in temper as the English name indicates suffi-

ciently, though the scene is laid out of England. This wife has her agony over the faithless husband, but she plans vengeance against neither him nor the other women who attract him. She realizes that his nature is not a deep and serious one like her own, and in her highest reach she sees that her own nature has been lifted up by means of her true and loyal feeling, that this gain to herself is her reward, or will be in some future state. The stanzas giving this thought are among the most beautiful in the poem.

AMONG THE ROCKS

I

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
  Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
  Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
  Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

Two of the longer poems have distinctly English settings: "A Blot in the Scutcheon" and "The Inn Album;" while, of the shorter ones, "Ned Bratts" has an English theme, and "Halbert and Hob" though not founded upon an English story has been given an English *mis en scène* by Browning.

In the "Blot," we get a glimpse of Eighteenth Century aristocratic England. The estate over which Lord Tresham presided was one of those typical country kingdoms, which have for centuries been so conspicuous a feature of English life, and which through the assemblies of the great, often gathered within their walls, wielded potent influences upon political life. The play opens with the talk of a group of retainers, such as formed the household of these lordly establishments. It was not a rare thing for the servants of the great to be admitted into intimacy with the family, as was the case with Gerard. They were often people of a superior grade, hardly to be classed with servants in the sense unfortunately given to that word to-day.

Besides the house and the park which figure in the play, such an estate had many acres of land devoted to agriculture — some of it, called the demesne, which was

cultivated for the benefit of the owner, and some land held in villeinage which the unfree tenants, called villeins, were allowed to till for themselves. All this land might be in one large tract, or the demesne might be separate from the other. Mertoun speaks of their demesnes touching each other. Over the villeins presided the Bailiff, who kept strict watch to see that they performed their work punctually. His duties were numerous, for he directed the ploughing, sowing and reaping, gave out the seed, watched the harvest, gathered and looked after the stock and horses. A church, a mill and an inn were often included in such an estate.

Pride in their ancient lineage was, of course, common to noble families, though probably few of them could boast as Tresham did that there was no blot in their escutcheon. Some writers have even declared that most of the nobles are descended from tradesmen. According to one of these "The great bulk of our peerage is comparatively modern, so far as the titles go; but it is not the less noble that it has been recruited to so large an extent from the ranks of honorable industry. In olden times, the wealth and commerce of London, conducted as it was by energetic and enterprising men was a prolific source of peerages.

An English Manor House

Thus, the earldom of Cornwallis was founded by Thomas Cornwallis, the Cheapside merchant; that of Essex by William Capel, the draper; and that of Craven by William Craven, the merchant tailor. The modern Earl of Warwick is not descended from 'the King-maker,' but from William Greville, the woolstapler; whilst the modern Dukes of Northumberland find their head, not in the Percies, but in Hugh Smithson, a respectable London apothecary. The founders of the families of Dartmouth, Radnor, Ducie, and Pomfret were respectively a skinner, a silk manufacturer, a merchant tailor, and a Calais merchant; whilst the founders of the peerages of Tankerville, Dormer, and Coventry were mercers. The ancestors of Earl Romney, and Lord Dudley and Ward, were goldsmiths and jewelers; and Lord Dacres was a banker in the reign of Charles I., as Lord Overstone is in that of Queen Victoria. Edward Osborne, the founder of the dukedom of Leeds, was apprentice to William Hewet, a rich cloth worker on London Bridge, whose only daughter he courageously rescued from drowning, by leaping into the Thames after her, and eventually married. Among other peerages founded by trade are those of Fitzwilliam, Leigh, Petre, Cowper, Darnley, Hill, and Carrington."

Perhaps the imaginary house of Tresham may be said to find its closest counterpart in the Sidney family, for many generations owners of Penshurst, and with a traditional character according to which the men were all brave and the women were all pure. Sir Philip Sidney was himself the type of all the virtues of the family, while his father's care for his proper bringing up was not unlike Tresham's for Mildred. In the words of a recent writer: "The most famous scion of this Kentish house was above all things, the moral and intellectual product of Penshurst Place. In the park may still be seen an avenue of trees, under which the father, in his afternoon walks with the boy, tested his recollection of the morning's lessons conned with the tutor, There, too, it was that he impressed on the lad those maxims for the conduct of life, afterwards emphasized in the correspondence still extant among the Penshurst archives.

"Philip was to begin every day with lifting up his mind to the Almighty in hearty prayer, as well as feelingly digesting all he prayed for. He was also, early or late, to be obedient to others, so that in due time others might obey him. The secret of all success lay in a moderate diet with rare use of wine. A gloomy

brow was, however, to be avoided. Rather should the youth give himself to be merry, so as not to degenerate from his father. Above all things should he keep his wit from biting words, or indeed from too much talk of any kind. Had not nature ramparted up the tongue with teeth and the lips with hair as reins and bridles against the tongue's loose use. Heeding this, he must be sure to tell no untruth even in trifles; for that was a naughty custom, nor could there be a greater reproach to a gentleman than to be accounted a liar. *Noblesse oblige* formed the keynote of the oral and written precepts with which the future Sir Philip Sidney was paternally supplied. By his mother, too, Lady Mary Dudley, the boy must remember himself to be of noble blood. Let him beware, therefore, through sloth and vice, of being accounted a blemish on his race."

Furthermore, the brotherly and sisterly relations of Tresham and Mildred are not unlike those of Sir Philip Sidney and his sister Mary. They studied and worked together in great sympathy, broken into only by the tragic fate of Sir Philip. Although the education of women in those days was chiefly domestic, with a smattering of accomplishments, yet there were exceptional girls who aspired to

learning and who became brilliant women. Mildred under her brother's tutelage bid fare to be one of this sort.

The ideals of the Sidneys, it is true, were sixteenth-century ideals. Eighteenth-century ideals were proverbially low. England, then, had not recovered from the frivolities inaugurated after the Restoration. The slackness and unbelief among the clergy, and the looseness of morals in society were notorious, but this degeneration could not have been universal. There are always a few Noahs and their families left to repeople the world with righteousness after a deluge of degeneracy, and Browning is quite right in his portrayal of an eighteenth-century knight *sans peur et sans reproche* who defends the honor of his house with his sword, because of his high moral ideals. Besides, the Methodist revival led by the Wesleys gained constantly in power. It affected not only the people of the middle and lower classes, rescuing them from brutality of mind and manners, but it affected the established church for the better, and made its mark upon the upper classes. "Religion, long despised and contemned by the titled and the great" writes Withrow, "began to receive recognition and support by men high in the councils of the nation. Many ladies of

high rank became devout Christians. A new element of restraint, compelling at least some outward respect for the decencies of life and observances of religion, was felt at court, where too long corruption and back-stair influence had sway."

Like all of his kind, no matter what the century, Tresham is more than delighted at the thought of an alliance between his house and the noble house to which Mertoun belonged. The youth of Mildred was no obstacle, for marriages were frequently contracted in those days between young boys and girls. The writer's English grand-father and mother were married at the respective ages of sixteen and fifteen within the boundaries of the nineteenth century.

The first two scenes of the play present episodes thoroughly illustrative of the life lived by the "quality."

ACT I

SCENE I. — *The interior of a lodge in* LORD TRESHAM'S *park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion.* GERARD, the *warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1*st Retainer.* Ye, do! push, friends, and then you'll push down me!

— What for? Does any hear a runner's foot

Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

Gerard. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2nd Retainer. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the country side,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?

Gerard. What then?

2nd Retainer. What then? Why, you, she speaks to if she meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her through her forest walks
You, always favorite for your no deserts
You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side — "there's the Earl," say I —
"What then," say you!

3rd Retainer. I'll wager he has let
Both swans be tamed for Lady Mildred swim
Over the falls and gain the river!

Gerard. Ralph!
Is not to-morrow my inspecting day
For you and for your hawks?

4th Retainer. Let Gerard be!

He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.
Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!
Well done, now — is not this beginning, now,
To purpose?
1st Retainer. Our retainers look as fine —
That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright?
4th Retainer. He's only bowing, fool!
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.
1st Retainer. That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!
3rd Retainer. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
Our family, if I, for instance, stood —
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left? —
Gerard. — With Hugh
The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!
3rd Retainer. Out on you, crab! What next, what next?
The Earl!
1st Retainer. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six —
They paw the ground — Ah Walter! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel!
6th Retainer. Ay — ay!
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst
So cunningly? — then, Philip, mark this further;
No leg has he to stand on!
1st Retainer. No? That's comfort.

2nd Retainer. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well,
Gerard, see
The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye.
3rd Retainer. His eyes are blue:
But leave my hawks alone!
4th Retainer. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely!
5th Retainer. Here's Lord Tresham's self!
There now — there's what a nobleman should be!
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's head.
2nd Retainer. But you'd not have a boy
— And what's the Earl beside? — possess too soon
That stateliness?
1st Retainer. Our master takes his hand —
Richard and his white staff are on the move —
Back fall our people — (tsh! — there's Timothy
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)
— At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;
And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them — in they go! [*Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.*]
Good health, long life
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!
6th Retainer. My father drove his father first to court,
After his marriage-day — ay, did he!
2nd Retainer. God bless
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!
Gerard. Drink, my boys!
Don't mind me — all's not right about me — drink!

2nd Retainer [*aside*]. He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!
[*To* GERARD.] Remember that the Earl returns this way.
Gerard. That way?
2nd Retainer. Just so.
Gerard. Then my way's here.
[*Goes.*
2nd Retainer. Old Gerard
Will die soon — mind, I said it! He was used
To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honor, not an eye
But his could see wherein: and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
Such point decorous, and such square by rule —
He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now — you see his humor: die he will!
2nd Retainer. God help him! Who's for the great servant's hall
To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow
Lord Tresham into the saloon.
3rd Retainer. I! —
4th Retainer. I! —
Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
Prosperity to the great House once more!
Here's the last drop!
1st Retainer. Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II. — *A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, *and* GUENDOLEN.

Tresham. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
— Noble among the noblest in itself,
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
New price and lustre, — (as that gem you wear,
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
Seems to re-kindle at the core) — your name
Would win you welcome! —

Mertoun. Thanks!

Tresham. — But add to that,
The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now — add these, and you must grant
One favor more, nor that the least, — to think
The welcome I should give; — 'tis given! My lord,
My only brother, Austin: he's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen — betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.

Mertoun. I thank you — less
For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates — forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,

He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
I love your sister — as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks me, they're yours, you know,
To hold or part with, at your choice — but grant
My true self, me without a rood of land,
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?

Guendolen [*apart to* AUSTIN]. Why, this is loving, Austin!

Austin. He's so young!

Guendolen. Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Austin. Hush!

He reddens.

Guendolen. Mark him, Austin; that's true love!
Ours must begin again.

Tresham. We'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.

Mertoun. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?

Tresham. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

Mertoun. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours, — or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And — and then . . . I have seen her.
Guendolen [*aside to* AUSTIN]. Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said —
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
Observed a red, where red should not have been,
Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!
Tresham. What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems —
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are — how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred — thus
We brothers talk!
Mertoun. I thank you.
Tresham. In a word,
Control's not for this lady; but her wish

To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more?
Mertoun. No more — thanks, thanks — no more!
Tresham. This matter then discussed . . .
Mertoun. — We'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander — as it must not do,
Since as you favor me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!
Tresham. With less regret 't is suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.
Mertoun. We? again? —
Ah yes, forgive me — when shall . . . you will crown
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you — and her.
Tresham. So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal — howsoe'er they lean —
A messenger shall bring you the result.
Mertoun. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.
Tresham. So may it prove!
Mertoun. You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation!
Guendolen and Austin. Thanks!
Tresham. Within there!
[Servants *enter.* TRESHAM *conducts* MERTOUN *to the door. Meantime* AUSTIN *remarks,*

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her — "do you say, yes —
"She'll not say, no," — what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,
For Heaven's sake urge this on her — put in this —
Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing, —
Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)
"Only let her accept me, and do you
And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guendolen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame
I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervor's run to waste!
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl's a fool.

Austin. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresham [*returning*]. Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's first!
How seems he? — seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
As you will never! come — the Earl?

Guendolen. He's young.

Tresham. What's she? an infant save in heart and brain.
Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . . .
Austin, how old is she?

Guendolen. There's tact for you!
I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

Tresham. Well?

Guendolen. — With lacking wit.

Tresham. He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?

Guendolen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,
Your cousin there will do me detriment
He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,
In my old name and fame — be sure he'll leave
My Mildred, when his best account of me
Is ended, in full confidence I wear
My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

Tresham. . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
— You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
All three of us: she's in the library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

Guendolen. Austin, how we must —!

Tresham. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!
I challenge you!

Guendolen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

Tresham. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him — say, to-morrow —
Next day at furthest.

Guendolen. Ne'er instruct me!

Tresham. Come!

— He's out of your good graces, since forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You're for the composed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
— Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

The story of the love of Mildred and Mertoun is the universally human one, and belongs to no one country or no one period of civilization more than another, but the attitude of all the actors in the tragedy belongs distinctively to the phase of moral culture which we saw illustrated in the youth of Sir Philip Sidney, and is characteristic of English ways of thinking whenever their moral force comes uppermost, as for example in the Puritan thought of the Cromwellian era.

The play is in a sense a problem play, though to most modern readers the tragedy of its ending is all too horrible a consequence of the sin. Dramatically and psychically, however, the tragedy is much more inevitable than that of Romeo and Juliet, whose love one naturally thinks of in the same connection. The catastrophe in the Shakespeare play is almost mechanically pushed to its conclusion through mere external blundering, easily to have been prevented. Juliet saw clearly where

Mildred does not, that loyalty to a deep and true love should triumph over all minor considerations, so that in her case the tragedy is, in no sense, due to her blindness of vision. In the "Blot," lack of perception of the true values in life makes it impossible for Mildred or Tresham to act otherwise than they did. But having worked out their problem according to their lights, a new light of a more glorious day dawns upon them.

The ideal by which Tresham lives and moves and has his being is that of pride of birth, with honor and chastity as its watchwords. At the same time the idol of his life is his sister Mildred, over whom he has watched with a father's and mother's care. When the blow to his ideal comes at the hands of this much cherished sister, it is not to be wondered at that his reason almost deserts him. The greatest agony possible to the human soul is to have its ideals, the very food which has been the sustenance of its being, utterly ruined. The ideal may be a wrong one, or an impartial one, and through the wrack and ruin may dawn larger vision, but, unless the nature be a marvelously developed one the storm that breaks when an ideal is shattered is overwhelming.

It would be equally true of Mildred that, nurtured as she had been and as young Eng-

lish girls usually are, in great purity, even ignorance of all things pertaining to life, the sense of her sin would be so overwhelming as to blind her to any possible means of expiation except the most extreme. And indeed may it not be said that only those who can see as Mertoun and Guendolen did that genuine and loyal love is no less love because, in a conventional sense, it has sinned, — only those would acknowledge, as Tresham, indeed, does after he has murdered Mertoun, how perfect the love of Mildred and Mertoun was. Sin flourishes only when insincerity tricks itself out in the garb of love, and on the whole it is well that human beings should have an abiding sense of their own and others insincerity, and test themselves by their willingness to acknowledge their love before God and man. There are many Mildreds but few Mertouns. It is little wonder that Dickens wrote with such enthusiasm of this play that he knew no love like that of Mildred and Mertoun, no passion like it.

One does not need to discuss whether murders were possible in English social life. They are possible in all life at all times as long as men and women allow their passions to overthrow their reason. The last act, however, illustrates the English poise already referred

An English Park

to; Tresham regains his equilibrium with enlarged vision, his salvation is accomplished, his soul awakened.

ACT III

SCENE I. — *The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under* MILDRED'S *window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM *through the trees.*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath — the orchard — I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step: the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's wimple — would proceed

No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here? What must I do? [*A bell strikes.*] A bell?
Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
— Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter* MERTOUN *cloaked as before.*

Mertoun. Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.

[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue,* TRESHAM *arrests his arm.*

Unhand me — peasant, by your grasp! Here's gold.
'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.

Tresham. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!

Out of the shadow!

Mertoun. I am armed, fool!

Tresham. Yes,

Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?
My hand is on your throat — refuse! —

Mertoun. That voice!

Where have I heard . . . no — that was mild and slow.
I'll come with you. [*They advance.*

Tresham. You're armed: that's well. Declare
Your name: who are you?

Mertoun. (Tresham! — she is lost!)

Tresham. Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they're detected, still your kind has looked!
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man.
Your name!

Mertoun. I do conjure Lord Tresham — ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail —
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name! As heaven's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.
Know me, Lord Tresham!

[*He throws off his disguises.*

Tresham. Mertoun!

[*After a pause.*] Draw now!

Mertoun. Hear me

But speak first!

Tresham. Not one least word on your life!
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat

The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 'twas you
Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.
We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief — a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!
Mertoun. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing — for your sake,
And most, for her sake!
Tresham. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire? A blow? — that's pride
No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?
Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these?
Mertoun. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge!
Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!
[*He draws and, after a few passes, falls.*
Tresham. You are not hurt?
Mertoun. You'll hear me now!
Tresham. But rise!
Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now!"
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defense before his fellow man,
But — I suppose — the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defense?
Tresham. Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned

My thrusts? Hurt where?
Mertoun. My lord —
Tresham. How young he is!
Mertoun. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently, —
Tresham. Can you stay here till I return with help?
Mertoun. Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong and knew it not —
Upon my honor, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right you than I took: my life — you feel
How less than nothing were the giving you
The life you've taken! But I thought my way
The better — only for your sake and hers:
And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives
To offer you! Now say — instruct me — think!
Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,
Eke out my reparation? Oh think — think!
For I must wring a partial — dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?
Tresham. I do
Forgive you.
Mertoun. Wait and ponder that great word!
Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of — Mildred!
Tresham. Mertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
Should tell me for a novelty you're young,
Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.
Be but your pardon ample as my own!
Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
Why, 'twas my very fear of you, my love
Of you — (what passion like a boy's for one
Like you?) — that ruined me! I dreamed of you —
You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
To knit myself to you: but I was young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday
Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
Had taken place perchance six months ago.
Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
Let me look up into your face; I feel
'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
Where? where?

[*As he endeavors to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.*

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away! I'll live — must live,
There, if you'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham — oh, had you but heard!
Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
All had gone otherwise?" We've sinned and die:
Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,
And God will judge you.

Tresham. Yes, be satisfied!
That process is begun.

Mertoun. And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her —

You, not another — say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, "I love her" — you don't know
What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you? — heartless men shall have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow — oh God! —
Upon those lips — yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honorable world to them! For God
We're good enough, though the world casts us out.

[*A whistle is heard.*

Tresham. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN *and* GUENDOLEN, *with lights.*

No one speak! You see what's done.
I cannot bear another voice.

Mertoun. There's light —
Light all about me, and I move to it.
Tresham, did I not tell you — did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?

Tresham. I will bear these words to her.

Mertoun. Now?

Tresham. Now. Lift you the body, and leave me
The head.

[*As they half raise* MERTOUN, *he turns suddenly.*

Mertoun. I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!

There! stay you! there! [*Dies.*

Guendolen [*after a pause.*] Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

Tresham. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred.

Guendolen. She will die.

Tresham. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?
Why, Austin's with you!

Austin. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

Tresham. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him — the boy! I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard — thus!
Now bear him on before me.

Austin. Whither bear him?

Tresham. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,
We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of* MERTOUN.

Will she die, Guendolen?

Guendolen. Where are you taking me?

Tresham. He fell just here.
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
— You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste —

Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head: and I then? —
Guendolen. What is done
Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!
Tresham. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell — farewell!

Scene II. — Mildred's *chamber.* Mildred *alone.*

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity, — you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh, 'tis not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not? — fails
Just this first night out of so many nights?
Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love
No more — contrive no thousand happy ways

To hide love from the loveless, any more.
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defense, to Thorold; he was breathless
For the least hint of a defense: but no,
The first shame over, all that would might fall.
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover — oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
Forsakes me: only Henry's left me — left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!

Tresham [*without*]. Mildred!

Mildred. Come in! Heaven hears me!

[*Enter* TRESHAM.] You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!

Tresham. Mildred, I must sit.
There — you sit!

Mildred. Say it, Thorold — do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!

Tresham. My thought?

Mildred. All of it!

Tresham. How we waded — years ago —
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came —

Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
Mildred, —

Mildred. You call me kindlier by my name
Than even yesterday: what is in that?

Tresham. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own!
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
Will you forgive me?

Mildred. Thorold? do you mock?
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!

Tresham. Forgive me, Mildred! — are you silent, Sweet?

Mildred [*starting up*]. Why does not Henry Mertoun come to-night?
Are you, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you!
You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you — I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresham. He bade me tell you . . .

Mildred. What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may tell
And will not — how you murdered him . . . but, no!
You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.

Tresham. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:

Of this last deed Another's judge: whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.
Mildred. Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon!
True!
You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him for ever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,
And take my answer — not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .
Tresham. Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die:
But she was sure of it.
Mildred. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .
Tresham. Him you loved:
And me?
Mildred. Ah, Thorold! Was't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me — whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor boy's speech
— Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me! — you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair —
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honor bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes — you struck him down!
Tresham. No! No!
Had I but heard him — had I let him speak
Half the truth — less — had I looked long on him

I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable,
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you — say on —
You curse me?

Mildred. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven, — I — forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!
[*Falls on his neck.*
There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud
While it stood up between my friend and you;
You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;
I may dispose of it: I give it you!
It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry! [*Dies.*

Tresham. I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad
In thy full gladness!

Guendolen [*without*]. Mildred! Tresham! [*Entering with* Austin.] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!
That's well.

Tresham. Oh, better far than that!

Guendolen. She's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!

Tresham. She threw them thus

About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:
You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!
Austin. Leave her
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?
Guendolen. White
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick — this side!
Austin. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;
Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:
Speak, dearest Thorold!
Tresham. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe! — there, there,
'Twill pass away soon! — ah, — I had forgotten:
I am dying.
Guendolen. Thorold — Thorold — why was this?
Tresham. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me.
There are blind ways provided, the foredone
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal: I am through —
Just through!
Guendolen. Don't leave him, Austin! Death is close.
Tresham. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.
I see you, Austin — feel you: here's my hand,
Put yours in it — you, Guendolen, yours too!
You're lord and lady now — you're Treshams; name
And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.
Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All's gules again: no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn!

Austin. No blot shall come!

Tresham. I said that: yet it did come. Should it come, Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me! [*Dies.*

Guendolen [*letting fall the pulseless arm*]. Ah, Thorold, we can but — remember you!

In "Ned Bratts," Browning has given a striking picture of the influence exerted by Bunyan upon some of his wicked contemporaries. The poet took his hints for the story from Bunyan himself, who tells it as follows in the "Life and Death of Mr. Badman."

"At a summer assizes holden at Hertford, while the judge was sitting upon the bench, comes this old Tod into the Court, clothed in a green suit, with his leathern girdle in his hand, his bosom open, and all on a dung sweat, as if he had run for his life; and being come in, he spake aloud, as follows: 'My lord,' said he, 'here is the veriest rogue that breathes upon the face of the earth. I have been a thief from a child: when I was but a little one, I gave myself to rob orchards and to do other such like wicked things, and I have continued a thief ever since. My lord, there has not been a robbery committed these many years, within so many miles of this place, but I have either been at it, or privy to it.' The judge thought the fellow was mad, but after some

conference with some of the justices, they agreed to indict him; and so they did of several felonious actions; to all of which he heartily confessed guilty, and so was hanged, with his wife at the same time."

Browning had the happy thought of placing this episode in Bedford amid the scenes of Bunyan's labors and imprisonment. Bunyan, himself, was tried at the Bedford Assizes upon the charge of preaching things he should not, or according to some accounts for preaching without having been ordained, and was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment in the Bedford Jail. At one time it was thought that he wrote "Pilgrim's Progress" during this imprisonment, but Dr. Brown, in his biography of Bunyan conjectured that this book was not begun until a later and shorter imprisonment of 1675–76, in the town prison and toll-house on Bedford Bridge. Dr. Brown supposes that the portion of the book written in prison closes where Christian and Hopeful part from the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains. "At that point a break in the narrative is indicated — 'So I awoke from my dream;' it is resumed with the words — 'And I slept and dreamed again, and saw the same two pilgrims going down the mountains along the highway towards the city.' Already from the top of an

high hill called 'Clear,' the Celestial City was in view; dangers there were still to be encountered; but to have reached that high hill and to have seen something like a gate, and some of the glory of the place, was an attainment and an incentive." There Bunyan could pause. Several years later the pilgrimage of Christiana was written.

Browning, however, adopts the tradition that the book was written during the twelve years' imprisonment, and makes use of the story of Bunyan's having supported himself during this time by making tagged shoe-laces. He brings in, also, the little blind daughter to whom Bunyan was said to be devoted. The Poet was evidently under the impression also that the assizes were held in a courthouse, but there is good authority for thinking that at that time they were held in the chapel of Herne. Nothing remains of this building now, but it was situated at the southwest corner of the churchyard of St. Paul, and was spoken of sometimes as the School-house chapel.

Ned Bratts and his wife did not know, of course, that they actually lived in the land of the "Pilgrim's Progress." This has been pointed out only recently in a fascinating little book by A. J. Foster of Wootton Vicarage, Bedfordshire. He has been a pilgrim from

Elstow, the village where Bunyan was born near Bedford, through all the surrounding country, and has fixed upon many spots beautiful and otherwise which he believes were transmuted in Bunyan's imagination into the House Beautiful, The Delectable Mountains, Vanity Fair and so on through nearly all the scenes of Christian's journey.

The House Beautiful he identifies with Houghton House in the manor of Dame Ellen's Bury. This is one of the most interesting of the country houses of England, because of its connection with Sir Philip Sidney's sister, Mary Sidney. After the death of her husband, Lord Pembroke, James I. presented her with the royal manor of Dame Ellen's Bury, and under the guidance of Inigo Jones, it is generally supposed, Houghton House was built. It is in ruins now and covered with ivy. Trees have grown within the ruins themselves. Still it is one of the most beautiful spots in Bedfordshire. "In Bunyan's time," Mr. Foster writes, "we may suppose the northern slope of Houghton Park was a series of terraces rising one above another, and laid out in the stiff garden fashion of the time. A flight of steps, or maybe a steep path, would lead from one terrace to the next, and gradually the view over the plain of Bed-

ford would reveal itself to the traveler as he mounted higher and higher."

From Houghton House there is a view of the Chiltern Hills. Mr. Foster is of the opinion that Bunyan had this view in mind when he described Christian as looking from the roof of the House Beautiful southwards towards the Delectable Mountains. He writes, "One of the main roads to London from Bedford, and the one, moreover, which passes through Elstow, crosses the hills only a little more than a mile east of Houghton House, and Bunyan, in his frequent journeys to London, no doubt often passed along this road. All in this direction was, therefore, to him familiar ground. Many a pleasant walk or ride came back to him through memory, as he took pen in hand to describe Hill Difficulty with its steep path and its arbor, and the House Beautiful with its guest-chamber, its large upper room looking eastward, its study and its armory.

"Many a time did Bunyan, as he journeyed, look southwards to the blue Chilterns, and when the time came he placed together all that he had seen, as the frame in which he should set his way-faring pilgrim."

Pleasant as it would be to follow with Mr. Foster his journey through the real scenes of

the "Pilgrim's Progress," our main interest at present is to observe how Browning's facile imagination has presented the conversion, through the impression made upon them by Bunyan's book, of Ned and his wife.

NED BRATTS

'T was Bedford Special Assize, one daft Midsummer's Day:
A broiling blasting June, — was never its like, men say.
Corn stood sheaf-ripe already, and trees looked yellow as that;
Ponds drained dust-dry, the cattle lay foaming around each flat.
Inside town, dogs went mad, and folk kept bibbing beer
While the parsons prayed for rain. 'T was horrible, yes — but queer:
Queer — for the sun laughed gay, yet nobody moved a hand
To work one stroke at his trade: as given to understand
That all was come to a stop, work and such worldly ways,
And the world's old self about to end in a merry blaze.
Midsummer's Day moreover was the first of Bedford Fair,
With Bedford Town's tag-rag and bobtail a-bowsing there.

But the Court House, Quality crammed: through doors ope, windows wide,
High on the Bench you saw sit Lordships side by side.
There frowned Chief Justice Jukes, fumed learned Brother Small,
And fretted their fellow Judge: like threshers, one and all,
Of a reek with laying down the law in a furnace. Why?
Because their lungs breathed flame — the regular crowd forbye —

From gentry pouring in — quite a nosegay, to be sure!
How else could they pass the time, six mortal hours endure
Till night should extinguish day, when matters might haply mend?
Meanwhile no bad resource was — watching begin and end
Some trial for life and death, in a brisk five minutes' space,
And betting which knave would 'scape, which hang, from his sort of face.

So, their Lordships toiled and moiled, and a deal of work was done
(I warrant) to justify the mirth of the crazy sun
As this and t'other lout, struck dumb at the sudden show
Of red robes and white wigs, boggled nor answered "Boh!"
When asked why he, Tom Styles, should not — because Jack Nokes
Had stolen the horse — be hanged: for Judges must have their jokes,
And louts must make allowance — let's say, for some blue fly
Which punctured a dewy scalp where the frizzles stuck awry —
Else Tom had fleered scot-free, so nearly over and done
Was the main of the job. Full-measure, the gentles enjoyed their fun,
As a twenty-five were tried, rank puritans caught at prayer
In a cow-house and laid by the heels, — have at 'em, devil may care! —
And ten were prescribed the whip, and ten a brand on the cheek,
And five a slit of the nose — just leaving enough to tweak.

Well, things at jolly high-tide, amusement steeped in fire,
While noon smote fierce the roof's red tiles to heart's desire,
The Court a-simmer with smoke, one ferment of oozy flesh,

One spirituous humming musk mount-mounting until its mesh
Entoiled all heads in a fluster, and Serjeant Postlethwayte
— Dashing the wig oblique as he mopped his oily pate —
Cried "Silence, or I grow grease! No loophole lets in air?
Jurymen, — Guilty, Death! Gainsay me if you dare!"
— Things at this pitch, I say, — what hubbub without the doors?
What laughs, shrieks, hoots and yells, what rudest of uproars?

Bounce through the barrier throng a bulk comes rolling vast!
Thumps, kicks, — no manner of use! — spite of them rolls at last
Into the midst a ball which, bursting, brings to view
Publican Black Ned Bratts and Tabby his big wife too:
Both in a muck-sweat, both . . . were never such eyes uplift
At the sight of yawning hell, such nostrils — snouts that sniffed
Sulphur, such mouths a-gape ready to swallow flame!
Horrified, hideous, frank fiend-faces! yet, all the same,
Mixed with a certain . . . eh? how shall I dare style — mirth
The desperate grin of the guest that, could they break from earth,
Heaven was above, and hell might rage in impotence
Below the saved, the saved!

"Confound you! (no offence!)
Out of our way, — push, wife! Yonder their Worships be!"
Ned Bratts has reached the bar, and "Hey, my Lords," roars he,
"A Jury of life and death, Judges the prime of the land,
Constables, javelineers, — all met, if I understand,

To decide so knotty a point as whether 't was Jack or Joan
Robbed the henroost, pinched the pig, hit the King's Arms
with a stone,
Dropped the baby down the well, left the tithesman in the
lurch,
Or, three whole Sundays running, not once attended church!
What a pother — do these deserve the parish-stocks or whip,
More or less brow to brand, much or little nose to snip, —
When, in our Public, plain stand we — that's we stand here,
I and my Tab, brass-bold, brick-built of beef and beer,
— Do not we, slut? Step forth and show your beauty, jade!
Wife of my bosom — that's the word now! What a trade
We drove! None said us nay: nobody loved his life
So little as wag a tongue against us, — did they, wife?
Yet they knew us all the while, in their hearts, for what we
are
— Worst couple, rogue and quean, unhanged — search near
and far!
Eh, Tab? The pedler, now — o'er his noggin — who warned
a mate
To cut and run, nor risk his pack where its loss of weight
Was the least to dread, — aha, how we two laughed a-good
As, stealing round the midden, he came on where I stood
With billet poised and raised, — you, ready with the rope, —
Ah, but that's past, that's sin repented of, we hope!
Men knew us for that same, yet safe and sound stood we!
The lily-livered knaves knew too (I've balked a d ——)
Our keeping the 'Pied Bull' was just a mere pretence:
Too slow the pounds make food, drink, lodging, from out
the pence!
There's not a stoppage to travel has chanced, this ten long
year,
No break into hall or grange, no lifting of nag or steer,
Not a single roguery, from the clipping of a purse

To the cutting of a throat, but paid us toll. Od's curse!
When Gipsy Smouch made bold to cheat us of our due,
— Eh, Tab? the Squire's strong-box we helped the rascal to —
I think he pulled a face, next Sessions' swinging-time!
He danced the jig that needs no floor, — and, here's the prime,
'T was Scroggs that houghed the mare! Ay, those were busy days!

"Well, there we flourished brave, like scripture-trees called bays,
Faring high, drinking hard, in money up to head
— Not to say, boots and shoes, when . . . Zounds, I nearly said —
Lord, to unlearn one's language! How shall we labor, wife?
Have you, fast hold, the Book? Grasp, grip it, for your life!
See, sirs, here's life, salvation! Here's — hold but out my breath —
When did I speak so long without once swearing? 'Sdeath,
No, nor unhelped by ale since man and boy! And yet
All yesterday I had to keep my whistle wet
While reading Tab this Book: book? don't say 'book' — they're plays,
Songs, ballads and the like: here's no such strawy blaze,
But sky wide ope, sun, moon, and seven stars out full-flare!
Tab, help and tell! I'm hoarse. A mug! or — no, a prayer!
Dip for one out of the Book! Who wrote it in the Jail
— He plied his pen unhelped by beer, sirs, I'll be bail!

"I've got my second wind. In trundles she — that's Tab.
'Why, Gammer, what's come now, that — bobbing like a crab
On Yule-tide bowl — your head's a-work and both your eyes
Break loose? Afeard, you fool? As if the dead can rise!

Say — Bagman Dick was found last May with fuddling-cap
Stuffed in his mouth: to choke's a natural mishap!'
'Gaffer, be — blessed,' cries she, 'and Bagman Dick as well!
I, you, and he are damned: this Public is our hell:
We live in fire: live coals don't feel! — once quenched, they
learn —
Cinders do, to what dust they moulder while they burn!'

"'If you don't speak straight out,' says I — belike I swore —
'A knobstick, well you know the taste of, shall, once more,
Teach you to talk, my maid!' She ups with such a face,
Heart sunk inside me. 'Well, pad on, my prate-apace!'
"'I've been about those laces we need for . . . never mind!
If henceforth they tie hands, 't is mine they'll have to bind.
You know who makes them best — the Tinker in our cage,
Pulled-up for gospelling, twelve years ago: no age
To try another trade, — yet, so he scorned to take
Money he did not earn, he taught himself the make
Of laces, tagged and tough — Dick Bagman found them so!
Good customers were we! Well, last week, you must know
His girl, — the blind young chit, who hawks about his
wares, —
She takes it in her head to come no more — such airs
These hussies have! Yet, since we need a stoutish lace, —
"I'll to the jail-bird father, abuse her to his face!"
So, first I filled a jug to give me heart, and then,
Primed to the proper pitch, I posted to their den —
Patmore — they style their prison! I tip the turnkey, catch
My heart up, fix my face, and fearless lift the latch —
Both arms a-kimbo, in bounce with a good round oath
Ready for rapping out: no "Lawks" nor "By my troth!"

"'There sat my man, the father. He looked up: what one
feels

When heart that leapt to mouth drops down again to heels!
He raised his hand . . . Hast seen, when drinking out the night,
And in the day, earth grow another something quite
Under the sun's first stare? I stood a very stone.

"'"Woman!" (a fiery tear he put in every tone),
"How should my child frequent your house where lust is sport,
Violence — trade? Too true! I trust no vague report.
Her angel's hand, which stops the sight of sin, leaves clear
The other gate of sense, lets outrage through the ear.
What has she heard! — which, heard shall never be again.
Better lack food than feast, a Dives in the — wain
Or reign or train — of Charles!" (His language was not ours:
'T is my belief, God spoke: no tinker has such powers.)
"Bread, only bread they bring — my laces: if we broke
Your lump of leavened sin, the loaf's first crumb would choke!"

"'Down on my marrow-bones! Then all at once rose he:
His brown hair burst a-spread, his eyes were suns to see:
Up went his hands: "Through flesh, I reach, I read thy soul!
So may some stricken tree look blasted, bough and bole,
Champed by the fire-tooth, charred without, and yet, thrice-bound
With dreriment about, within may life be found,
A prisoned power to branch and blossom as before,
Could but the gardener cleave the cloister, reach the core,
Loosen the vital sap: yet where shall help be found?
Who says 'How save it?' — nor 'Why cumbers it the ground?'
Woman, that tree art thou! All sloughed about with scurf,
Thy stag-horns fright the sky, thy snake-roots sting the turf!
Drunkenness, wantonness, theft, murder gnash and gnarl

Thine outward, case thy soul with coating like the marle
Satan stamps flat upon each head beneath his hoof!
And how deliver such? The strong men keep aloof,
Lover and friend stand far, the mocking ones pass by,
Tophet gapes wide for prey: lost soul, despair and die!
What then? 'Look unto me and be ye saved!' saith God:
'I strike the rock, outstreats the life-stream at my rod!
Be your sins scarlet, wool shall they seem like, — although
As crimson red, yet turn white as the driven snow!'"

"'There, there, there! All I seem to somehow understand
Is — that, if I reached home, 't was through the guiding hand
Of his blind girl which led and led me through the streets
And out of town and up to door again. What greets
First thing my eye, as limbs recover from their swoon?
A book — this Book she gave at parting. "Father's boon —
The Book he wrote: it reads as if he spoke himself:
He cannot preach in bonds, so, — take it down from shelf
When you want counsel, — think you hear his very voice!"
"'Wicked dear Husband, first despair and then rejoice!
Dear wicked Husband, waste no tick of moment more,
Be saved like me, bald trunk! There's greenness yet at core,
Sap under slough! Read, read!'

"Let me take breath, my lords!
I'd like to know, are these — hers, mine, or Bunyan's words?
I'm 'wildered — scarce with drink, — nowise with drink alone!
You'll say, with heat: but heat's no stuff to split a stone
Like this black boulder — this flint heart of mine: the Book —
That dealt the crashing blow! Sirs, here's the fist that shook
His beard till Wrestler Jem howled like a just-lugged bear!
You had brained me with a feather: at once I grew aware
Christmas was meant for me. A burden at your back,

Good Master Christmas? Nay, — yours was that Joseph's sack,
— Or whose it was, — which held the cup, — compared with mine!
Robbery loads my loins, perjury cracks my chine,
Adultery . . . nay, Tab, you pitched me as I flung!
One word, I'll up with fist . . . No, sweet spouse, hold your tongue!

"I'm hasting to the end. The Book, sirs — take and read!
You have my history in a nutshell, — ay, indeed!
It must off, my burden! See, — slack straps and into pit,
Roll, reach the bottom, rest, rot there — a plague on it!
For a mountain's sure to fall and bury Bedford Town,
'Destruction' — that's the name, and fire shall burn it down!
O 'scape the wrath in time! Time's now, if not too late.
How can I pilgrimage up to the wicket-gate?
Next comes Despond the slough: not that I fear to pull
Through mud, and dry my clothes at brave House Beautiful —
But it's late in the day, I reckon: had I left years ago
Town, wife, and children dear . . . Well, Christmas did, you know! —
Soon I had met in the valley and tried my cudgel's strength
On the enemy horned and winged, a-straddle across its length!
Have at his horns, thwick — thwack: they snap, see! Hoof and hoof —
Bang, break the fetlock-bones! For love's sake, keep aloof
Angels! I'm man and match, — this cudgel for my flail, —
To thresh him, hoofs and horns, bat's wing and serpent's tail!
A chance gone by! But then, what else does Hopeful ding
Into the deafest ear except — hope, hope's the thing?
Too late i' the day for me to thrid the windings: but
There's still a way to win the race by death's short cut!

Did Master Faithful need climb the Delightful Mounts?
No, straight to Vanity Fair, — a fair, by all accounts,
Such as is held outside, — lords, ladies, grand and gay, —
Says he in the face of them, just what you hear me say.
And the Judges brought him in guilty, and brought him out
To die in the market-place — St. Peter's Green's about
The same thing: there they flogged, flayed, buffeted, lanced
with knives,
Pricked him with swords, — I'll swear, he'd full a cat's nine
lives, —
So to his end at last came Faithful, — ha, ha, he!
Who holds the highest card? for there stands hid, you see,
Behind the rabble-rout, a chariot, pair and all:
He's in, he's off, he's up, through clouds, at trumpet-call,
Carried the nearest way to Heaven-gate! Odds my life —
Has nobody a sword to spare? not even a knife?
Then hang me, draw and quarter! Tab — do the same by
her!
O Master Worldly-Wiseman . . . that's Master Interpreter,
Take the will, not the deed! Our gibbet's handy close:
Forestall Last Judgment-Day! Be kindly, not morose!
There wants no earthly judge-and-jurying: here we stand —
Sentence our guilty selves: so, hang us out of hand!
Make haste for pity's sake! A single moment's loss
Means — Satan's lord once more: his whisper shoots across
All singing in my heart, all praying in my brain,
'It comes of heat and beer!' — hark how he guffaws plain!
'To-morrow you'll wake bright, and, in a safe skin, hug
Your sound selves, Tab and you, over a foaming jug!
You've had such qualms before, time out of mind!' He's
right!
Did not we kick and cuff and curse away, that night,
When home we blindly reeled, and left poor humpback Joe
I' the lurch to pay for what . . . somebody did, you know!

Both of us maundered then 'Lame humpback, — never more
Will he come limping, drain his tankard at our door!
He'll swing, while — somebody . . .' Says Tab, 'No, for
I'll peach!'
'I'm for you, Tab,' cries I, 'there's rope enough for each!'
So blubbered we, and bussed, and went to bed upon
The grace of Tab's good thought: by morning, all was gone!
We laughed — 'What's life to him, a cripple of no account?'
Oh, waves increase around — I feel them mount and mount!
Hang us! To-morrow brings Tom Bearward with his bears:
One new black-muzzled brute beats Sackerson, he swears:
(Sackerson, for my money!) And, baiting o'er, the Brawl
They lead on Turner's Patch, — lads, lasses, up tails all, —
I'm i' the thick o' the throng! That means the Iron Cage,
— Means the Lost Man inside! Where's hope for such as
wage
War against light? Light's left, light's here, I hold light still,
So does Tab — make but haste to hang us both! You will?"

I promise, when he stopped you might have heard a mouse
Squeak, such a death-like hush sealed up the old Mote House.
But when the mass of man sank meek upon his knees,
While Tab, alongside, wheezed a hoarse "Do hang us,
please!"
Why, then the waters rose, no eye but ran with tears,
Hearts heaved, heads thumped, until, paying all past arrears
Of pity and sorrow, at last a regular scream outbroke
Of triumph, joy and praise.

My Lord Chief Justice spoke,
First mopping brow and cheek, where still, for one that
budged,
Another bead broke fresh: "What Judge, that ever judged
Since first the world began, judged such a case as this?

Why, Master Bratts, long since, folk smelt you out, I wis!
I had my doubts, i' faith, each time you played the fox
Convicting geese of crime in yonder witness-box —
Yea, much did I misdoubt, the thief that stole her eggs
Was hardly goosey's self at Reynard's game, i' feggs!
Yet thus much was to praise — you spoke to point, direct —
Swore you heard, saw the theft: no jury could suspect —
Dared to suspect, — I'll say, — a spot in white so clear:
Goosey was throttled, true: but thereof godly fear
Came of example set, much as our laws intend;
And, though a fox confessed, you proved the Judge's friend.
What if I had my doubts? Suppose I gave them breath,
Brought you to bar: what work to do, ere 'Guilty, Death,' —
Had paid our pains! What heaps of witnesses to drag
From holes and corners, paid from out the County's bag!
Trial three dog-days long! *Amicus Curiæ* — that's
Your title, no dispute — truth-telling Master Bratts!
Thank you, too, Mistress Tab! Why doubt one word you say?
Hanging you both deserve, hanged both shall be this day!
The tinker needs must be a proper man. I've heard
He lies in Jail long since: if Quality's good word
Warrants me letting loose, — some householder, I mean —
Freeholder, better still, — I don't say but — between
Now and next Sessions . . . Well! Consider of his case,
I promise to, at least: we owe him so much grace.
Not that — no, God forbid! — I lean to think, as you,
The grace that such repent is any jail-bird's due:
I rather see the fruit of twelve years' pious reign —
Astræa Redux, Charles restored his rights again!
— Of which, another time! I somehow feel a peace
Stealing across the world. May deeds like this increase!
So, Master Sheriff, stay that sentence I pronounced
On those two dozen odd: deserving to be trounced
Soundly, and yet . . . well, well, at all events despatch

This pair of — shall I say, sinner-saints? — ere we catch
Their jail-distemper too. Stop tears, or I'll indite
All weeping Bedfordshire for turning Bunyanite!"

So, forms were galloped through. If Justice, on the spur,
Proved somewhat expeditious, would Quality demur?
And happily hanged were they, — why lengthen out my tale? —
Where Bunyan's Statue stands facing where stood his Jail.

The effect which "Pilgrim's Progress" had on these two miserable beings, may be taken as typical of the enormous influence wielded by Bunyan in his own time. The most innocent among us had overwhelming qualms in regard to our sins, as children when we listened to our mothers read the book. I remember having confessed some childish peccadillo that was weighing on my small mind as the first result of my thoroughly aroused sense of guilt. In these early years of the Twentieth Century, such a feeling seems almost as far removed as the days of Bunyan. A sense of guilt is not a distinguishing characteristic of the child of the present day, and it may also be doubted whether such reprobates as Ned and his wife would to-day be affected much if at all by the "Pilgrim's Progress." There was probably great personal magnetism in Bunyan himself. We are told that after his discharge from prison, his

popularity as a preacher widened rapidly. Such vast crowds of people flocked to hear him that his place of worship had to be enlarged. He went frequently to London on week days to deliver addresses in the large chapel in Southwark which was invariably thronged with eager worshipers.

Browning's picture of Bunyan shows the instant effect of his personality upon Tab.

"There sat the man, the father. He looked up: what one feels
When heart that leapt to mouth drops down again to heels!
He raised his hand . . . Hast seen, when drinking out the night,
And in the day, earth grow another something quite
Under the sun's first stare? I stood a very stone."

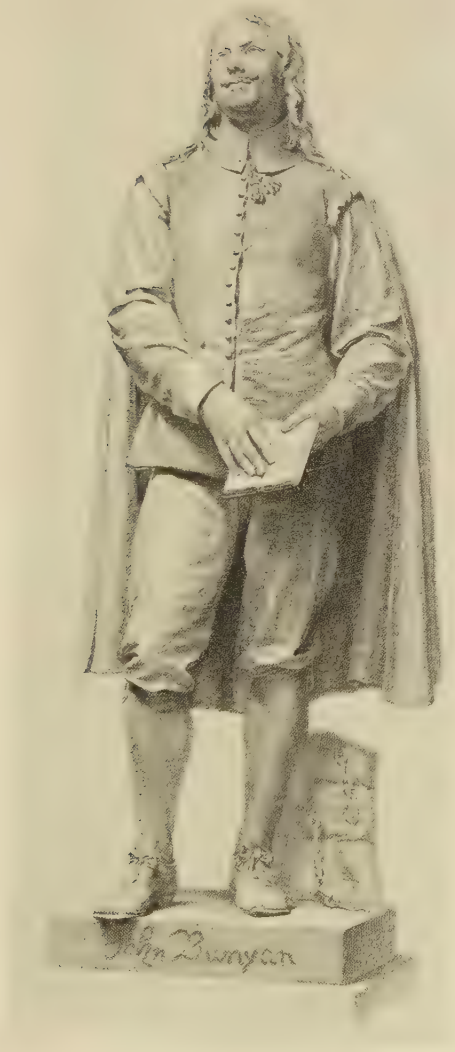
And again

"Then all at once rose he:
His brown hair burst a-spread, his eyes were suns to see:
Up went his hands."

It is like a clever bit of stage business to make Ned and Tab use the shoe laces to tie up the hands of their victims, and to bring on by this means the meeting between Tab and Bunyan. Of course, the blind daughter's part is imaginary, but yet it seems to bring very vividly before us this well loved child. Another touch, quite in keeping with the time,

is the decision of the Judge that the remarkable change of heart in Ned and Tab was due to the piety of King Charles. Like every one else, however, he was impressed by what he heard of the Tinker, and inclined to see what he could do to give him his freedom. It seems that Bunyan's life in jail was a good deal lightened by the favor he always inspired. The story goes that from the first he was in favor with the jailor, who nearly lost his place for permitting him on one occasion to go as far as London. After this he was more strictly confined, but at last he was often allowed to visit his family, and remain with them all night. One night, however, when he was allowed this liberty Bunyan felt resistlessly impressed with the propriety of returning to the prison. He arrived after the keeper had shut up for the night, much to the official's surprise. But his impatience at being untimely disturbed was changed to thankfulness, when a little after a messenger came from a neighboring clerical magistrate to see that the prisoner was safe. "You may go now when you will" said the jailer; "for you know better than I can tell you when to come in again."

Though Bunyan is not primarily the subject of this poem, it is an appreciative tribute



JOHN BUNYAN
Statue by J. E. Boehm

to his genius and to his force of character, only to be paralleled by Dowden's sympathetic critique in his "Puritan and Anglican Studies." What Browning makes Ned and Tab see through suddenly aroused feeling — namely that it is no book but

"plays,
Songs, ballads and the like: here's no such strawy blaze,
But sky wide ope, sun, moon, and seven stars out full-flare,"

Dowden puts in the colder language of criticism.

"The 'Pilgrim's Progress' is a gallery of portraits, admirably discriminated, and as convincing in their self-verification as those of Holbein. His personages live for us as few figures outside the drama of Shakespeare live. . . . All his powers cooperated harmoniously in creating this book — his religious ardor, his human tenderness, his sense of beauty, nourished by the Scriptures, his strong common sense, even his gift of humor. Through his deep seriousness play the lighter faculties. The whole man presses into this small volume."

"Halbert and Hob" belongs here merely for its wild North of England setting. We may imagine, if we choose, that this wild father and son dwelt in the beautiful country of Northumberland, in the North of England,

but descriptions of the scenery could add nothing to the atmosphere of the poem, for Northumberland is surpassingly lovely. Doubtless, human beings of this type have existed in all parts of the globe. At any rate, these particular human beings were transported by Browning from Aristotle's "Ethics" to the North of England. The incident is told by Aristotle in illustration of the contention that anger and asperity are more natural than excessive and unnecessary desires. "Thus one who was accused of striking his father said, as an apology for it, that his own father, and even his grandfather, had struck his; 'and he also (pointing to his child) will strike me, when he becomes a man; for it runs in our family.' A certain person, also, being dragged by his son, bid him stop at the door, for he himself had dragged his father as far as that." The dryness of "Aristotle's checks" is as usual so enlivened by Browning that the fate of Halbert and Hob grows pathetic and comes close to our sympathies.

HALBERT AND HOB

Here is a thing that happened. Like wild beasts whelped, for den,
In a wild part of North England, there lived once two wild men

Inhabiting one homestead, neither a hovel nor hut,
Time out of mind their birthright: father and son, these — but —
Such a son, such a father! Most wildness by degrees
Softens away: yet, last of their line, the wildest and worst were these.

Criminals, then? Why, no: they did not murder and rob;
But, give them a word, they returned a blow — old Halbert as young Hob:
Harsh and fierce of word, rough and savage of deed,
Hated or feared the more — who knows? — the genuine wild-beast breed.

Thus were they found by the few sparse folk of the country-side;
But how fared each with other? E'en beasts couch, hide by hide,
In a growling, grudged agreement: so, father and son aye curled
The closelier up in their den because the last of their kind in the world.

Still, beast irks beast on occasion. One Christmas night of snow,
Came father and son to words — such words! more cruel because the blow
To crown each word was wanting, while taunt matched gibe, and curse
Completed with oath in wager, like pastime in hell, — nay, worse:
For pastime turned to earnest, as up there sprang at last
The son at the throat of the father, seized him and held him fast.

"Out of this house you go!" — (there followed a hideous oath) —
"This oven where now we bake, too hot to hold us both!
If there's snow outside, there's coolness: out with you, bide a spell
In the drift and save the sexton the charge of a parish shell!"

Now, the old trunk was tough, was solid as stump of oak
Untouched at the core by a thousand years: much less had its seventy broke
One whipcord nerve in the muscly mass from neck to shoulder-blade
Of the mountainous man, whereon his child's rash hand like a feather weighed.

Nevertheless at once did the mammoth shut his eyes,
Drop chin to breast, drop hands to sides, stand stiffened — arms and thighs
All of a piece — struck mute, much as a sentry stands,
Patient to take the enemy's fire: his captain so commands.

Whereat the son's wrath flew to fury at such sheer scorn
Of his puny strength by the giant eld thus acting the babe new-born:
And "Neither will this turn serve!" yelled he. "Out with you! Trundle, log!
If you cannot tramp and trudge like a man, try all-fours like a dog!"

Still the old man stood mute. So, logwise, — down to floor
Pulled from his fireside place, dragged on from hearth to door, —
Was he pushed, a very log, staircase along, until
A certain turn in the steps was reached, a yard from the house-door-sill.

Then the father opened eyes — each spark of their rage extinct, —
Temples, late black, dead-blanched, — right-hand with left-hand linked, —
He faced his son submissive; when slow the accents came,
They were strangely mild though his son's rash hand on his neck lay all the same.

"Hob, on just such a night of a Christmas long ago,
For such a cause, with such a gesture, did I drag — so —
My father down thus far: but, softening here, I heard
A voice in my heart, and stopped: you wait for an outer word.

"For your own sake, not mine, soften you too! Untrod
Leave this last step we reach, nor brave the finger of God!
I dared not pass its lifting: I did well. I nor blame
Nor praise you. I stopped here: and, Hob, do you the same!"

Straightway the son relaxed his hold of the father's throat.
They mounted, side by side, to the room again: no note
Took either of each, no sign made each to either: last
As first, in absolute silence, their Christmas-night they passed.

At dawn, the father sate on, dead, in the self-same place,
With an outburst blackening still the old bad fighting-face:
But the son crouched all a-tremble like any lamb new-yeaned.

When he went to the burial, someone's staff he borrowed — tottered and leaned.
But his lips were loose, not locked, — kept muttering, mumbling. "There!
At his cursing and swearing!" the youngsters cried: but the elders thought "In prayer."

A boy threw stones: he picked them up and stored them in
his vest.

So tottered, muttered, mumbled he, till he died, perhaps
found rest.
"Is there a reason in nature for these hard hearts?" O Lear,
That a reason out of nature must turn them soft, seems clear!

In the "Inn Album," a degenerate type of Nineteenth-Century Englishman is dissected with the keen knife of a surgeon, which Browning knows so well how to wield. The villain of this poem was a real personage, a Lord de Ros, a friend of the Duke of Wellington. The story belongs to the annals of crime and is necessarily unpleasant, but in order to see how Browning has worked up the episode it is interesting to know the bare facts as Furnivall gives them in "Notes and Queries" March 25, 1876. He says "that the gambling lord showed the portrait of the lady he had seduced and abandoned and offered his dupe an introduction to her, as a bribe to induce him to wait for payment of the money he had won; that the young gambler eagerly accepted the offer; and that the lady committed suicide on hearing of the bargain between them." Dr. Furnivall heard the story from some one who well remembered the sensation it had made in London

years ago. In his management of the story, Browning has intensified the villainy of the Lord at the same time that he has shown a possible streak of goodness in him. The young man, on the other hand, he has made to be of very good stuff, indeed, notwithstanding his year of tutelage from the older man. He makes one radical change in the story as well as several minor ones. In the poem the younger man had been in love with the girl whom the older man had dishonorably treated, and had never ceased to love her. Of course, the two men do not know this. By the advice of the elder man, the younger one has decided to settle down and marry his cousin, a charming young girl, who is also brought upon the scene. The other girl is represented as having married an old country parson, who sought a wife simply as a helpmeet in his work. By thus complicating the situations, room has been given for subtle psychic development. The action is all concentrated into one morning in the parlor of the old inn, reminding one much of the method of Ibsen in his plays of grouping his action about a final catastrophe. At the inn one is introduced first to the two gamblers in talk, the young man having won his ten thousand pounds from the older man, who had intended

to fleece him. The inn album plays an important part in the action, innocent as its first appearance upon the scene seems to be. The description of this and the inn parlor opens the poem.

THE INN ALBUM

I

"That oblong book's the Album; hand it here!
Exactly! page on page of gratitude
For breakfast, dinner, supper, and the view!
I praise these poets: they leave margin-space;
Each stanza seems to gather skirts around,
And primly, trimly, keep the foot's confine,
Modest and maidlike; lubber prose o'er-sprawls
And straddling stops the path from left to right.
Since I want space to do my cipher-work,
Which poem spares a corner? What comes first?
'*Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot!*'
(Open the window, we burn daylight, boy!)
Or see — succincter beauty, brief and bold —
'*If a fellow can dine On rumpsteaks and port wine,*
He needs not despair Of dining well here —'
'*Here!*' I myself could find a better rhyme!
That bard's a Browning; he neglects the form:
But ah, the sense, ye gods, the weighty sense!
Still, I prefer this classic. Ay, throw wide!
I'll quench the bits of candle yet unburnt.
A minute's fresh air, then to cipher-work!
Three little columns hold the whole account:
Ecarté, after which Blind Hookey, then

Cutting-the-Pack, five hundred pounds the cut.
'Tis easy reckoning: I have lost, I think."

Two personages occupy this room
Shabby-genteel, that's parlor to the inn
Perched on a view-commanding eminence;
— Inn which may be a veritable house
Where somebody once lived and pleased good taste
Till tourists found his coign of vantage out,
And fingered blunt the individual mark
And vulgarized things comfortably smooth.
On a sprig-pattern-papered wall there brays
Complaint to sky Sir Edwin's dripping stag;
His couchant coast-guard creature corresponds;
They face the Huguenot and Light o' the World.
Grim o'er the mirror on the mantlepiece,
Varnished and coffined, *Salmo ferox* glares
— Possibly at the List of Wines which, framed
And glazed, hangs somewhat prominent on peg.

So much describes the stuffy little room —
Vulgar flat smooth respectability:
Not so the burst of landscape surging in,
Sunrise and all, as he who of the pair
Is, plain enough, the younger personage
Draws sharp the shrieking curtain, sends aloft
The sash, spreads wide and fastens back to wall
Shutter and shutter, shows you England's best.
He leans into a living glory-bath
Of air and light where seems to float and move
The wooded watered country, hill and dale
And steel-bright thread of stream, a-smoke with mist,
A-sparkle with May morning, diamond drift
O' the sun-touched dew. Except the red-roofed patch

Of half a dozen dwellings that, crept close
For hill-side shelter, make the village-clump
This inn is perched above to dominate —
Except such sign of human neighborhood,
(And this surmised rather than sensible)
There's nothing to disturb absolute peace,
The reign of English nature — which mean art
And civilized existence. Wildness' self
Is just the cultured triumph. Presently
Deep solitude, be sure, reveals a Place
That knows the right way to defend itself:
Silence hems round a burning spot of life.
Now, where a Place burns, must a village brood,
And where a village broods, an inn should boast —
Close and convenient: here you have them both.
This inn, the Something-arms — the family's —
(Don't trouble Guillim; heralds leave our half!)
Is dear to lovers of the picturesque,
And epics have been planned here; but who plan
Take holy orders and find work to do.
Painters are more productive, stop a week,
Declare the prospect quite a Corot, — ay,
For tender sentiment, — themselves incline
Rather to handsweep large and liberal;
Then go, but not without success achieved
— Haply some pencil-drawing, oak or beech,
Ferns at the base and ivies up the bole,
On this a slug, on that a butterfly.
Nay, he who hooked the *salmo* pendent here,
Also exhibited, this same May-month,
'*Foxgloves: a study*' — so inspires the scene,
The air, which now the younger personage
Inflates him with till lungs o'erfraught are fain
Sigh forth a satisfaction might bestir

Even those tufts of tree-tops to the South
I' the distance where the green dies off to grey,
Which, easy of conjecture, front the Place;
He eyes them, elbows wide, each hand to cheek.
His fellow, the much older — either say
A youngish-old man or man oldish-young —
Sits at the table: wicks are noisome-deep
In wax, to detriment of plated ware;
Above — piled, strewn — is store of playing-cards,
Counters and all that's proper for a game.

Circumstantial as the description of this parlor and the situation of the inn is, it is impossible to say which out of the many English inns Browning had in mind. Inns date back to the days of the Romans, who had ale-houses along the roads, the most interesting feature of which was the ivy garland or wreath of vine-leaves in honor of Bacchus, wreathed around a hoop at the end of a long pole to point out the way where good drink could be had. A curious survival of this in early English times was the "ale-stake," a tavern so called because it had a long pole projecting from the house front wreathed like the old Roman poles with furze, a garland of flowers or an ivy wreath. This decoration was called the "bush," and in time the London taverners so vied with each other in their attempt to attract attention by very long poles and very prominent bushes that in 1375

a law was passed according to which all taverners in the city of London owning ale-stakes projecting or extending over the King's highway more than seven feet in length, at the utmost, should be fined forty pence, and compelled to remove the sign. Here is the origin, too, of the proverb, "good wine needs no bush." In the later development of the inn the signs lost their Bacchic character and became most elaborate, often being painted by artists.

The poet says this inn was the "Something-arms," and had perhaps once been a house. Many inns were the "Something (?) arms" and certainly many inns had been houses. One such is the Pounds Bridge Inn on a secluded road between Speldhurst and Penshurst in Kent. It was built by the rector of Penshurst, William Darkenoll, who lived in it only three years, when it became an inn. The inn of the poem might have been a combination in Browning's memory of this and the "White Horse" at Woolstone, which is described as a queerly pretty little inn with a front distantly resembling a Chippendale bureau-bookcase. "It is tucked away under the mighty sides of White Horse Hill, Berkshire, and additionally overhung with trees and encircled with shrubberies and under-

woods, and is finally situated on a narrow road that presently leads, as it would seem, to the end of the known world." So writes the enthusiastic lover of inns, Charles Harper. Or, perhaps, since there is a river to be seen from the inn of the poem the "Swan" at Sandleford Water, where a foot bridge and a water splash on the river Enborne mark the boundaries of Hampshire and Berkshire. Here "You have the place wholly to yourself, or share it only with the squirrels and the birds of the overarching trees." The illustration given of the Black Bear Inn, Tewksbury, is a quite typical example of inn architecture, and may have helped the picture in Browning's mind, though its situation is not so rural as that described in the poem.

Inns have, from time immemorial, been the scenes of romances and tragedies and crimes. There have been inns like the "Castle" where the "quality" loved to congregate. The "inn album" of this establishment had inscribed in it almost every eighteenth-century name of any distinction. There have been inns which were noted as the resort of the wits of the day. Ben Jonson loved to take "mine ease in mine inn," and Dr. Johnson declared that a seat in a tavern chair was the height of human felicity. "He was thinking," as it has

been pertinently put, "not only of a comfortable sanded parlor, a roaring fire, and plenty of good cheer and good company, but also of the circle of humbly appreciative auditors who gathered round an accepted wit, hung upon his words, offered themselves as butts for his ironic or satiric humor, and — stood treat." Or there was the inn of sinister aspect where highwaymen might congregate, or inns with hosts who let their guests down through trap-doors in the middle of the night to rob and murder them — or is this only a vague remembrance of a fanciful inn of Dickens? Then there was the pilgrim's inn in the days when Chaucerian folks loved to go on pilgrimages, and in the last century the cyclists inn, and to-day the inn of the automobilist. The particular inn in the poem belongs to the class, rural inn, and in spite of its pictures by noted masters was "stuffy" as to the atmosphere.

The "inn album" or visitors' book is a feature of inns. In this country we simply sign our names in the visitors' book, but the "album" feature of the visitors' book of an English inn is its glory and too often its shame, for as Mr. Harper says, "Bathos, ineptitude, and lines that refuse to scan are the stigmata of visitors' book verse. There is

An English Inn

no worse poetry on earth than that which lurks between those covers, or in the pages of young ladies' albums." He declares that "The interesting pages of visitors' books are generally those that are not there, as an Irishman might say; for the world is populated very densely with those appreciative people who, whether from a love of literature, or with an instinct for collecting autographs that may have a realizable value, remove the signatures of distinguished men, and with them anything original they may have written."

Browning pokes fun at the poetry of his inn album, but at the same time uses it as an important part of the machinery in the action. His English "Iago" writes in it the final damnation of his own character — the threat by means of which he hopes to ruin his victims, but which, instead, causes the lady to take poison and the young man to murder "Iago."

The presence of the two men at this particular inn is explained in the following bit of conversation between them.

You wrong your poor disciple. Oh, no airs!
Because you happen to be twice my age
And twenty times my master, must perforce
No blink of daylight struggle through the web

There's no unwinding? You entoil my legs,
And welcome, for I like it: blind me, — no!
A very pretty piece of shuttle-work
Was that — your mere chance question at the club —
'Do you go anywhere this Whitsuntide?
I'm off for Paris, there's the Opera — there's
The Salon, there's a china-sale, — beside
Chantilly; and, for good companionship,
There's Such-and-such and So-and-so. Suppose
We start together?' 'No such holiday!'
I told you: '*Paris and the rest be hanged!*
Why plague me who am pledged to home-delights?
I'm the engaged now; through whose fault but yours?
On duty. As you well know. Don't I drowse
The week away down with the Aunt and Niece?
No help: it's leisure, loneliness and love.
Wish I could take you; but fame travels fast,' —
A man of much newspaper-paragraph,
You scare domestic circles; and beside
Would not you like your lot, that second taste
Of nature and approval of the grounds!
You might walk early or lie late, so shirk
Week-day devotions: but stay Sunday o'er,
And morning church is obligatory:
No mundane garb permissible, or dread
The butler's privileged monition! No!
Pack off to Paris, nor wipe tear away!'
Whereon how artlessly the happy flash
Followed, by inspiration! '*Tell you what —*
Let's turn their flank, try things on t'other side!
Inns for my money! Liberty's the life!
We'll lie in hiding: there's the crow-nest nook,
The tourist's joy, the Inn they rave about,
Inn that's out — out of sight and out of mind

And out of mischief to all four of us —
Aunt and niece, you and me. At night arrive;
At morn, find time for just a Pisgah-view
Of my friend's Land of Promise; then depart.
And while I'm whizzing onward by first train,
Bound for our own place (since my Brother sulks
And says I shun him like the plague) yourself —
Why, you have stepped thence, start from platform, gay
Despite the sleepless journey, — love lends wings, —
Hug aunt and niece who, none the wiser, wait
The faithful advent! Eh?' 'With all my heart,'
Said I to you; said I to mine own self:
'*Does he believe I fail to comprehend*
He wants just one more final friendly snack
At friend's exchequer ere friend runs to earth,
Marries, renounces yielding friends such sport?'
And did I spoil sport, pull face grim, — nay, grave?
Your pupil does you better credit! No!
I parleyed with my pass-book, — rubbed my pair
At the big balance in my banker's hands, —
Folded a cheque cigar-case-shape, — just wants
Filling and signing, — and took train, resolved
To execute myself with decency
And let you win — if not Ten thousand quite,
Something by way of wind-up-farewell burst
Of firework-nosegay! Where's your fortune fled?
Or is not fortune constant after all?
You lose ten thousand pounds: had I lost half
Or half that, I should bite my lips, I think.
You man of marble! Strut and stretch my best
On tiptoe, I shall never reach your height.
How does the loss feel! Just one lesson more!"

The more refined man smiles a frown away.

On the way to the station where the older man is to take the train they have another talk, in which each tells the other of his experience, but they do not find out yet that they have both loved the same woman.

"Stop, my boy!
Don't think I'm stingy of experience! Life
— It's like this wood we leave. Should you and I
Go wandering about there, though the gaps
We went in and came out by were opposed
As the two poles, still, somehow, all the same,
By nightfall we should probably have chanced
On much the same main points of interest —
Both of us measured girth of mossy trunk,
Stript ivy from its strangled prey, clapped hands
At squirrel, sent a fir-cone after crow,
And so forth, — never mind what time betwixt.
So in our lives; allow I entered mine
Another way than you: 't is possible
I ended just by knocking head against
That plaguy low-hung branch yourself began
By getting bump from; as at last you too
May stumble o'er that stump which first of all
Bade me walk circumspectly. Head and feet
Are vulnerable both, and I, foot-sure,
Forgot that ducking down saves brow from bruise.
I, early old, played young man four years since
And failed confoundedly: so, hate alike
Failure and who caused failure, — curse her cant!"

"Oh, I see! You, though somewhat past the prime,
Were taken with a rosebud beauty! Ah —

But how should chits distinguish? She admired
Your marvel of a mind, I'll undertake!
But as to body . . . nay, I mean . . . that is,
When years have told on face and figure . . ."

"Thanks,
Mister *Sufficiently-Instructed!* Such
No doubt was bound to be the consequence
To suit your self-complacency: she liked
My head enough, but loved some heart beneath
Some head with plenty of brown hair a-top
After my young friend's fashion! What becomes
Of that fine speech you made a minute since
About the man of middle age you found
A formidable peer at twenty-one?
So much for your mock-modesty! and yet
I back your first against this second sprout
Of observation, insight, what you please.
My middle age, Sir, had too much success!
It's odd: my case occurred four years ago —
I finished just while you commenced that turn
I' the wood of life that takes us to the wealth
Of honeysuckle, heaped for who can reach.
Now, I don't boast: it's bad style, and beside,
The feat proves easier than it looks: I plucked
Full many a flower unnamed in that bouquet
(Mostly of peonies and poppies, though!)
Good nature sticks into my button-hole.
Therefore it was with nose in want of snuff
Rather than Ess or Psidium, that I chanced
On what — so far from '*rosebud beauty*' . . . Well —
She's dead: at least you never heard her name;
She was no courtly creature, had nor birth
Nor breeding — mere fine-lady-breeding; but

Oh, such a wonder of a woman! Grand
As a Greek statue! Stick fine clothes on that,
Style that a Duchess or a Queen, — you know,
Artists would make an outcry: all the more,
That she had just a statue's sleepy grace
Which broods o'er its own beauty. Nay, her fault
(Don't laugh!) was just perfection: for suppose
Only the little flaw, and I had peeped
Inside it, learned what soul inside was like.
At Rome some tourist raised the grit beneath
A Venus' forehead with his whittling-knife —
I wish, — now, — I had played that brute, brought blood
To surface from the depths I fancied chalk!
As it was, her mere face surprised so much
That I stopped short there, struck on heap, as stares
The cockney stranger at a certain bust
With drooped eyes, — she's the thing I have in mind, —
Down at my Brother's. All sufficient prize —
Such oustide! Now, — confound me for a prig! —
Who cares? I'll make a clean breast once for all!
Beside, you've heard the gossip. My life long
I've been a woman-liker, — liking means
Loving and so on. There's a lengthy list
By this time I shall have to answer for —
So say the good folk: and they don't guess half —
For the worst is, let once collecting-itch
Possess you, and, with perspicacity,
Keeps growing such a greediness that theft
Follows at no long distance, — there's the fact!
I knew that on my Leporello-list
Might figure this, that, and the other name
Of feminine desirability,
But if I happened to desire inscribe,
Along with these, the only Beautiful —

Here was the unique specimen to snatch
Or now or never. 'Beautiful' I said —
'Beautiful' say in cold blood, — boiling then
To tune of '*Haste, secure whate'er the cost*
This rarity, die in the act, be damned,
So you complete collection, crown your list!'
It seemed as though the whole world, once aroused
By the first notice of such wonder's birth,
Would break bounds to contest my prize with me
The first discoverer, should she but emerge
From that safe den of darkness where she dozed
Till I stole in, that country-parsonage
Where, country-parson's daughter, motherless,
Brotherless, sisterless, for eighteen years
She had been vegetating lily-like.
Her father was my brother's tutor, got
The living that way: him I chanced to see —
Her I saw — her the world would grow one eye
To see, I felt no sort of doubt at all!
'*Secure her!*' cried the devil: '*afterward*
Arrange for the disposal of the prize!'
The devil's doing! yet I seem to think —
Now, when all's done, — think with '*a head reposed*'
In French phrase — hope I think I meant to do
All requisite for such a rarity
When I should be at leisure, have due time
To learn requirement. But in evil day —
Bless me, at week's end, long as any year,
The father must begin '*Young Somebody,*
Much recommended — for I break a rule —
Comes here to read, next Long Vacation.' '*Young!*'
That did it. Had the epithet been '*rich,*'
'*Noble,*' '*a genius,*' even '*handsome,*' — but
— '*Young!*'"

"I say — just a word! I want to know —
You are not married?"
"I?"

"Nor ever were?"
"Never! Why?"
"Oh, then — never mind! Go on!
I had a reason for the question."

"Come, —
You could not be the young man?"
"No, indeed!
Certainly — if you never married her!"

"That I did not: and there's the curse, you'll see!
Nay, all of it's one curse, my life's mistake
Which, nourished with manure that's warranted
To make the plant bear wisdom, blew out full
In folly beyond field-flower-foolishness!
The lies I used to tell my womankind,
Knowing they disbelieved me all the time
Though they required my lies, their decent due,
This woman — not so much believed, I'll say,
As just anticipated from my mouth:
Since being true, devoted, constant — she
Found constancy, devotion, truth, the plain
And easy commonplace of character.
No mock-heroics but seemed natural
To her who underneath the face, I knew
Was fairness' self, possessed a heart, I judged
Must correspond in folly just as far
Beyond the common, — and a mind to match, —
Not made to puzzle conjurers like me
Who, therein, proved the fool who fronts you, Sir,

And begs leave to cut short the ugly rest!
'*Trust me!*' I said: she trusted. '*Marry me!*'
Or rather, '*We are married: when, the rite?*'
That brought on the collector's next-day qualm
At counting acquisition's cost. There lay
My marvel, there my purse more light by much
Because of its late lie-expenditure:
Ill-judged such moment to make fresh demand —
To cage as well as catch my rarity!
So, I began explaining. At first word
Outbroke the horror. '*Then, my truths were lies!*'
I tell you, such an outbreak, such new strange
All-unsuspected revelation — soul
As supernaturally grand as face
Was fair beyond example — that at once
Either I lost — or, if it please you, found
My senses, — stammered somehow — '*Jest! and now,*
Earnest! Forget all else but — heart has loved,
Does love, shall love you ever! take the hand!'
Not she! no marriage for superb disdain,
Contempt incarnate!"

"Yes, it's different, —
It's only like in being four years since.
I see now!"

"Well, what did disdain do next,
Think you?"

"That's past me: did not marry you! —
That's the main thing I care for, I suppose.
Turned nun, or what?"

"Why, married in a month

Some parson, some smug crop-haired smooth-chinned sort
Of curate-creature, I suspect, — dived down,
Down, deeper still, and came up somewhere else —
I don't know where — I've not tried much to know, —
In short, she's happy: what the clodpoles call
'Countrified' with a vengeance! leads the life
Respectable and all that drives you mad:
Still — where, I don't know, and that's best for both."

"Well, that she did not like you, I conceive.
But why should you hate her, I want to know?"

"My good young friend, — because or her or else
Malicious Providence I have to hate.
For, what I tell you proved the turning-point
Of my whole life and fortune toward success
Or failure. If I drown, I lay the fault
Much on myself who caught at reed not rope,
But more on reed which, with a packthread's pith,
Had buoyed me till the minute's cramp could thaw
And I strike out afresh and so be saved.
It's easy saying — I had sunk before,
Disqualified myself by idle days
And busy nights, long since, from holding hard
On cable, even, had fate cast me such!
You boys don't know how many times men fail
Perforce o' the little to succeed i' the large,
Husband their strength, let slip the petty prey,
Collect the whole power for the final pounce.
My fault was the mistaking man's main prize
For intermediate boy's diversion; clap
Of boyish hands here frightened game away
Which, once gone, goes forever. Oh, at first
I took the anger easily, nor much

Minded the anguish — having learned that storms
Subside, and teapot-tempests are akin.
Time would arrange things, mend whate'er might be
Somewhat amiss; precipitation, eh?
Reason and rhyme prompt — reparation! Tiffs
End properly in marriage and a dance!
I said 'We'll marry, make the past a blank' —
And never was such damnable mistake!
That interview, that laying bare my soul,
As it was first, so was it last chance — one
And only. Did I write? Back letter came
Unopened as it went. Inexorable
She fled, I don't know where, consoled herself
With the smug curate-creature: chop and change!
Sure am I, when she told her shaveling all
His Magdalen's adventure, tears were shed,
Forgiveness evangelically shown,
'Loose hair and lifted eye,' — as some one says.
And now, he's worshipped for his pains, the sneak!"

"Well, but your turning-point of life, — what's here
To hinder you contesting Finsbury
With Orton, next election? I don't see . . ."

'Not you! But *I* see. Slowly, surely, creeps
Day by day o'er me the conviction — here
Was life's prize grasped at, gained, and then let go!
— That with her — may be, for her — I had felt
Ice in me melt, grow steam, drive to effect
Any or all the fancies sluggish here
I' the head that needs the hand she would not take
And I shall never lift now. Lo, your wood —
Its turnings which I likened life to! Well, —
There she stands, ending every avenue,

Her visionary presence on each goal
I might have gained had we kept side by side!
Still string nerve and strike foot? Her frown forbids:
The steam congeals once more: I'm old again!
Therefore I hate myself — but how much worse
Do not I hate who would not understand,
Let me repair things — no, but sent a-slide
My folly falteringly, stumblingly
Down, down and deeper down until I drop
Upon — the need of your ten thousand pounds
And consequently loss of mine! I lose
Character, cash, nay, common-sense itself
Recounting such a lengthy cock-and-bull
Adventure — lose my temper in the act . . ."

"And lose beside, — if I may supplement
The list of losses, — train and ten-o'clock!
Hark, pant and puff, there travels the swart sign!
So much the better! You're my captive now!
I'm glad you trust a fellow: friends grow thick
This way — that's twice said; we were thickish, though,
Even last night, and, ere night comes again,
I prophesy good luck to both of us!
For see now! — back to '*balmy eminence*'
Or '*calm acclivity*,' or what's the word!
Bestow you there an hour, concoct at ease
A sonnet for the Album, while I put
Bold face on, best foot forward, make for house,
March in to aunt and niece, and tell the truth —
(Even white-lying goes against my taste
After your little story). Oh, the niece
Is rationality itself! The aunt —
If she's amenable to reason too —
Why, you stooped short to pay her due respect,

And let the Duke wait (I'll work well the Duke).
If she grows gracious, I return for you;
If thunder's in the air, why — bear your doom,
Dine on rump-steaks and port, and shake the dust
Of aunty from your shoes as off you go
By evening-train, nor give the thing a thought
How you shall pay me — that's as sure as fate,
Old fellow! Off with you, face left about!
Yonder's the path I have to pad. You see,
I'm in good spirits, God knows why! Perhaps
Because the woman did not marry you
—Who look so hard at me, — and have the right,
One must be fair and own."

The two stand still
Under an oak.

"Look here!" resumes the youth.
"I never quite knew how I came to like
You — so much — whom I ought not court at all;
Nor how you had a leaning just to me
Who am assuredly not worth your pains.
For there must needs be plenty such as you
Somewhere about, — although I can't say where, —
Able and willing to teach all you know;
While — how can you have missed a score like me
With money and no wit, precisely each
A pupil for your purpose, were it — ease
Fool's poke of tutor's *honorarium*-fee?
And yet, howe'er it came about, I felt
At once my master: you as prompt descried
Your man, I warrant, so was bargain struck.
Now, these same lines of liking, loving, run
Sometimes so close together they converge —

Life's great adventures — you know what I mean —
In people. Do you know, as you advanced,
It got to be uncommonly like fact
We two had fallen in with — liked and loved
Just the same woman in our different ways?
I began life — poor groundling as I prove —
Winged and ambitious to fly high: why not?
There's something in 'Don Quixote' to the point,
My shrewd old father used to quote and praise —
'*Am I born man?*' asks Sancho: '*being man,*
By possibility I may be Pope!'
So, Pope I meant to make myself, by step
And step, whereof the first should be to find
A perfect woman; and I tell you this —
If what I fixed on, in the order due
Of undertakings, as next step, had first
Of all disposed itself to suit my tread,
And I had been, the day I came of age,
Returned at head of poll for Westminster
— Nay, and moreover summoned by the Queen
At week's end, when my maiden-speech bore fruit,
To form and head a Tory ministry —
It would not have seemed stranger, no, nor been
More strange to me, as now I estimate,
Than what did happen — sober truth, no dream.
I saw my wonder of a woman, — laugh,
I'm past that! — in Commemoration-week.
A plenty have I seen since, fair and foul, —
With eyes, too, helped by your sagacious wink;
But one to match that marvel — no least trace,
Least touch of kinship and community!
The end was — I did somehow state the fact,
Did, with no matter what imperfect words,
One way or other give to understand

That woman, soul and body were her slave
Would she but take, but try them — any test
Of will, and some poor test of power beside:
So did the strings within my brain grow tense
And capable of . . . hang similitudes!
She answered kindly but beyond appeal.
'No sort of hope for me, who came too late.
She was another's. Love went — mine to her,
Hers just as loyally to some one else.'
Of course! I might expect it! Nature's law —
Given the peerless woman, certainly
Somewhere shall be the peerless man to match!
I acquiesced at once, submitted me
In something of a stupor, went my way.
I fancy there had been some talk before
Of somebody — her father or the like —
To coach me in the holidays, — that's how
I came to get the sight and speech of her, —
But I had sense enough to break off sharp,
Save both of us the pain."

"Quite right there!"

"Eh?

Quite wrong, it happens! Now comes worst of all!
Yes, I did sulk aloof and let alone
The lovers — *I* disturb the angel-mates?"

"Seraph paired off with cherub!"

"Thank you! While

I never plucked up courage to inquire
Who he was, even, — certain-sure of this,
That nobody I knew of had blue wings
And wore a star-crown as he needs must do, —

Some little lady, — plainish, pock-marked girl, —
Finds out my secret in my woful face,
Comes up to me at the Apollo Ball,
And pityingly pours her wine and oil
This way into the wound: '*Dear f-f-friend,*
Why waste affection thus on — must I say,
A somewhat worthless object? Who's her choice —
Irrevocable as deliberate —
Out of the wide world? I shall name no names —
But there's a person in society,
Who, blessed with rank and talent, has grown gray
In idleness and sin of every sort
Except hypocrisy: he's thrice her age,
A by-word for "successes with the sex"
As the French say — and, as we ought to say,
Consummately a liar and a rogue,
Since — show me where's the woman won without
The help of this one lie which she believes —
That — never mind how things have come to pass,
And let who loves have loved a thousand times —
All the same he now loves her only, loves
Her ever! if by "won" you just mean "sold,"
That's quite another compact. Well, this scamp,
Continuing descent from bad to worse,
Must leave his fine and fashionable prey
(*Who — fathered, brothered, husbanded, — are hedged*
About with thorny danger) *and apply*
His arts to this poor country ignorance
Who sees forthwith in the first rag of man
Her model hero! Why continue waste
On such a woman treasures of a heart
Would yet find solace, — yes, my f-f-friend —
In some congenial — fiddle-diddle-dee?'"

"Pray, is the pleasant gentleman described
Exact the portrait which my '*f-f-friends*'
Recognize as so like? 'T is evident
You half surmised the sweet original
Could be no other than myself, just now!
Your stop and start were flattering!"

"Of course
Caricature's allowed for in a sketch!
The longish nose becomes a foot in length,
The swarthy cheek gets copper-colored, — still,
Prominent beak and dark-hued skin are facts:
And '*parson's daughter*' — '*young man coachable*' —
'*Elderly party*' — '*four years since*' — were facts
To fasten on, a moment! Marriage, though —
That made the difference, I hope."

"All right!
I never married; wish I had — and then
Unwish it: people kill their wives, sometimes!
I hate my mistress, but I'm murder-free.
In your case, where's the grievance? You came last,
The earlier bird picked up the worm. Suppose
You, in the glory of your twenty-one,
Had happened to precede myself! 't is odds
But this gigantic juvenility,
This offering of a big arm's bony hand —
I'd rather shake than feel shake me, I know —
Had moved *my* dainty mistress to admire
An altogether new Ideal — deem
Idolatry less due to life's decline
Productive of experience, powers mature
By dint of usage, the made man — no boy
That's all to make! I was the earlier bird —

And what I found, I let fall: what you missed
Who is the fool that blames you for?"

They become so deeply interested in this talk that the train is missed, and, in the meantime, the lady who now lives in the neighborhood as the wife of the hard-working country parson meets the young girl at the inn. They are great friends and have come there, at the girl's invitation, to talk over her prospective husband. She desires her friend to come to her home and meet her fiancé, but the lady, who is in constant fear of meeting "Iago," never goes anywhere, and proposes a meeting with him at the inn. While she waits, "Iago" comes in upon her. There is a terrible scene of recrimination between these two, the man again daring to prefer his love. The lady scorns him. Horror is added to horror when the young man appears at the door, and recognizes the woman he really loves. His faith in her and his love are shaken for a moment, but return immediately and he stands her true friend and lover. The complete despicableness of "Iago's" nature finally reveals itself in the lines he writes in the album and gives to the lady to read. The poem is too long to quote in full. The closing scene, however, will give the reader a good idea of

the poet's handling of this nineteenth-century tragedy.

The true nobility of soul of the younger man links him with Mertoun among Browning's heroes and represents the Englishman or the man of any country for that matter at his highest. Whether redemption for the older man would have been possible had the lady believed him in the inn parlor is doubtful. Such natures are like Ibsen's "Peer Gynt." They need to be put into a button mould and moulded over again.

"Here's the lady back!
So, Madam, you have conned the Album-page
And come to thank its last contributor?
How kind and condescending! I retire
A moment, lest I spoil the interview,
And mar my own endeavor to make friends —
You with him, him with you, and both with me!
If I succeed — permit me to inquire
Five minutes hence! Friends bid good-by, you know."
And out he goes.

VII

She, face, form, bearing, one
Superb composure —

"He has told you all?
Yes, he has told you all, your silence says —
What gives him, as he thinks the mastery
Over my body and my soul! — has told

That instance, even, of their servitude
He now exacts of me? A silent blush!
That's well, though better would white ignorance
Beseem your brow, undesecrate before —
Ay, when I left you! I too learn at last
— Hideously learned as I seemed so late —
What sin may swell to. Yes, — I needed learn
That, when my prophet's rod became the snake
I fled from, it would, one day, swallow up
— Incorporate whatever serpentine
Falsehood and treason and unmanliness
Beslime earth's pavement: such the power of Hell,
And so beginning, ends no otherwise
The Adversary! I was ignorant,
Blameworthy — if you will; but blame I take
Nowise upon me as I ask myself
— *You* — how can you, whose soul I seemed to read
The limpid eyes through, have declined so deep
Even with him for consort? I revolve
Much memory, pry into the looks and words
Of that day's walk beneath the College wall,
And nowhere can distinguish, in what gleams
Only pure marble through my dusky past,
A dubious cranny where such poison-seed
Might harbor, nourish what should yield to-day
This dread ingredient for the cup I drink.
Do not I recognize and honor truth
In seeming? — take your truth and for return,
Give you my truth, a no less precious gift?
You loved me: I believed you. I replied
— How could I other? '*I was not my own*,'
— No longer had the eyes to see, the ears
To hear, the mind to judge, since heart and soul
Now were another's. My own right in me,

For well or ill, consigned away — my face
Fronted the honest path, deflection whence
Had shamed me in the furtive backward look
At the late bargain — fit such chapman's phrase! —
As though — less hasty and more provident —
Waiting had brought advantage. Not for me
The chapman's chance! Yet while thus much was true,
I spared you — as I knew you then — one more
Concluding word which, truth no less, seemed best
Buried away forever. Take it now
Its power to pain is past! Four years — that day —
Those lines that make the College avenue!
I would that — friend and foe — by miracle,
I had, that moment, seen into the heart
Of either, as I now am taught to see!
I do believe I should have straight assumed
My proper function, and sustained a soul,
Nor aimed at being just sustained myself
By some man's soul — the weaker woman's-want!
So had I missed the momentary thrill
Of finding me in presence of a god,
But gained the god's own feeling when he gives
Such thrill to what turns life from death before.
'*Gods many and Lords many*,' says the Book:
You would have yielded up your soul to me
— Not to the false god who has burned its clay
In his own image. I had shed my love
Like Spring dew on the clod all flowery thence,
Not sent up a wild vapor to the sun
That drinks and then disperses. Both of us
Blameworthy, — I first meet my punishment —
And not so hard to bear. I breathe again!
Forth from those arms' enwinding leprosy
At last I struggle — uncontaminate:

Why must I leave *you* pressing to the breast
That's all one plague-spot? Did you love me once?
Then take love's last and best return! I think,
Womanliness means only motherhood;
All love begins and ends there, — roams enough,
But, having run the circle, rests at home.
Why is your expiation yet to make?
Pull shame with your own hands from your own head
Now, — never wait the slow envelopment
Submitted to by unelastic age!
One fierce throe frees the sapling: flake on flake
Lull till they leave the oak snow-stupefied.
Your heart retains its vital warmth — or why
That blushing reassurance? Blush, young blood!
Break from beneath this icy premature
Captivity of wickedness — I warn
Back, in God's name! No fresh encroachment here!
This May breaks all to bud — No Winter now!
Friend, we are both forgiven! Sin no more!
I am past sin now, so shall you become!
Meanwhile I testify that, lying once,
My foe lied ever, most lied last of all.
He, waking, whispered to your sense asleep
The wicked counsel, — and assent might seem;
But, roused, your healthy indignation breaks
The idle dream-pact. You would die — not dare
Confirm your dream-resolve, — nay, find the word
That fits the deed to bear the light of day!
Say I have justly judged you! then farewell
To blushing — nay, it ends in smiles, not tears!
Why tears now? I have justly judged, thank God!"

He does blush boy-like, but the man speaks out,
— Makes the due effort to surmount himself.

"I don't know what he wrote — how should I? Nor
How he could read my purpose which, it seems,
He chose to somehow write — mistakenly
Or else for mischief's sake. I scarce believe
My purpose put before you fair and plain
Would need annoy so much; but there's my luck —
From first to last I blunder. Still, one more
Turn at the target, try to speak my thought!
Since he could guess my purpose, won't you read
Right what he set down wrong? He said — let's think!
Ay, so! — he did begin by telling heaps
Of tales about you. Now, you see — suppose
Any one told me — my own mother died
Before I knew her — told me — to his cost! —
Such tales about my own dead mother: why,
You would not wonder surely if I knew,
By nothing but my own heart's help, he lied,
Would you? No reason's wanted in the case.
So with you! In they burnt on me, his tales,
Much as when madhouse-inmates crowd around,
Make captive any visitor and scream
All sorts of stories of their keeper — he's
Both dwarf and giant, vulture, wolf, dog, cat,
Serpent and scorpion, yet man all the same;
Sane people soon see through the gibberish!
I just made out, you somehow lived somewhere
A life of shame — I can't distinguish more —
Married or single — how, don't matter much:
Shame which himself had caused — that point was clear,
That fact confessed — that thing to hold and keep.
Oh, and he added some absurdity
— That you were here to make me — ha, ha, ha! —
Still love you, still of mind to die for you,
Ha, ha — as if that needed mighty pains!

Now, foolish as . . . but never mind myself
— What I am, what I am not, in the eye
Of the world, is what I never cared for much.
Fool then or no fool, not one single word
In the whole string of lies did I believe,
But this — this only — if I choke, who cares? —
I believe somehow in your purity
Perfect as ever! Else what use is God?
He is God, and work miracles He can!
Then, what shall I do? Quite as clear, my course!
They've got a thing they call their Labyrinth
I' the garden yonder: and my cousin played
A pretty trick once, led and lost me deep
Inside the briery maze of hedge round hedge;
And there might I be staying now, stock-still,
But that I laughing bade eyes follow nose
And so straight pushed my path through let and stop
And soon was out in the open, face all scratched,
But well behind my back the prison-bars
In sorry plight enough, I promise you!
So here: I won my way to truth through lies —
Said, as I saw light, — if her shame be shame
I'll rescue and redeem her, — shame's no shame?
Then, I'll avenge, protect — redeem myself
The stupidest of sinners! Here I stand!
Dear, — let me once dare call you so, — you said
Thus ought you to have done, four years ago,
Such things and such! Ay, dear, and what ought I?
You were revealed to me: where's gratitude,
Where's memory even, where the gain of you
Discernible in my low after-life
Of fancied consolation? why, no horse
Once fed on corn, will, missing corn, go munch
Mere thistles like a donkey! I missed you,

And in your place found — him, made him my love,
Ay, did I, — by this token, that he taught
So much beast-nature that I meant . . . God knows
Whether I bow me to the dust enough! . . .
To marry — yes, my cousin here! I hope
That was a master-stroke! Take heart of hers,
And give her hand of mine with no more heart
Than now you see upon this brow I strike!
What atom of a heart do I retain
Not all yours? Dear, you know it! Easily
May she accord me pardon when I place
My brow beneath her foot, if foot so deign,
Since uttermost indignity is spared —
Mere marriage and no love! And all this time
Not one word to the purpose! Are you free?
Only wait! only let me serve — deserve
Where you appoint and how you see the good!
I have the will — perhaps the power — at least
Means that have power against the world. For time —
Take my whole life for your experiment!
If you are bound — in marriage, say — why, still,
Still, sure, there's something for a friend to do,
Outside? A mere well-wisher, understand!
I'll sit, my life long, at your gate, you know,
Swing it wide open to let you and him
Pass freely, — and you need not look, much less
Fling me a '*Thank you — are you there, old friend?*'
Don't say that even: I should drop like shot!
So I feel now at least: some day, who knows?
After no end of weeks and months and years
You might smile '*I believe you did your best!*'
And that shall make my heart leap — leap such leap
As lands the feet in Heaven to wait you there!
Ah, there's just one thing more! How pale you look!

Why? Are you angry? If there's, after all,
Worst come to worst — if still there somehow be
The shame — I said was no shame, — none, I swear! —
In that case, if my hand and what it holds, —
My name, — might be your safeguard now — at once —
Why, here's the hand — you have the heart! Of course —
No cheat, no binding you, because I'm bound,
To let me off probation by one day,
Week, month, year, lifetime! Prove as you propose!
Here's the hand with the name to take or leave!
That's all — and no great piece of news, I hope!"

"Give me the hand, then!" she cries hastily.
"Quick, now! I hear his footstep!"
Hand in hand
The couple face him as he enters, stops
Short, stands surprised a moment, laughs away
Surprise, resumes the much-experienced man.

"So, you accept him?"
"Till us death do part!"

"No longer? Come, that's right and rational!
I fancied there was power in common sense,
But did not know it worked thus promptly. Well —
At last each understands the other, then?
Each drops disguise, then? So, at supper-time
These masquerading people doff their gear,
Grand Turk his pompous turban, Quakeress
Her stiff-starched bib and tucker, — make-believe
That only bothers when, ball-business done,
Nature demands champagne and *mayonnaise*.
Just so has each of us sage three abjured
His and her moral pet particular

Pretension to superiority,
And, cheek by jowl, we henceforth munch and joke!
Go, happy pair, paternally dismissed
To live and die together — for a month,
Descretion can award no more! Depart
From whatsoe'er the calm sweet solitude
Selected — Paris not improbably —
At month's end, when the honeycomb's left wax,
— You, daughter, with a pocketful of gold
Enough to find your village boys and girls
In duffel cloaks and hobnailed shoes from May
To — what's the phrase? — Christmas-come-never-mas!
You, son and heir of mine, shall re-appear
Ere Spring-time, that's the ring-time, lose one leaf,
And — not without regretful smack of lip
The while you wipe it free of honey-smear —
Marry the cousin, play the magistrate,
Stand for the country, prove perfection's pink —
Master of hounds, gay-coated dine — nor die
Sooner than needs of gout, obesity,
And sons at Christ Church! As for me, — ah me,
I abdicate — retire on my success,
Four years well occupied in teaching youth
— My son and daughter the exemplary!
Time for me to retire now, having placed
Proud on their pedestal the pair: in turn,
Let them do homage to their master! You, —
Well, your flushed cheek and flashing eye proclaim
Sufficiently your gratitude: you paid
The *honorarium*, the ten thousand pounds
To purpose, did you not? I told you so!
And you, but, bless me, why so pale — so faint
At influx of good fortune? Certainly,
No matter how or why or whose the fault,

I save your life — save it, nor less nor more!
You blindly were resolved to welcome death
In that black boor-and-bumpkin-haunted hole
Of his, the prig with all the preachments! *You*
Installed as nurse and matron to the crones
And wenches, while there lay a world outside
Like Paris (which again I recommend)
In company and guidance of — first, this,
Then — all in good time — some new friend as fit —
What if I were to say, some fresh myself,
As I once figured? Each dog has his day,
And mine's at sunset: what should old dog do
But eye young litters' frisky puppyhood?
Oh I shall watch this beauty and this youth
Frisk it in brilliance! But don't fear! Discreet,
I shall pretend to no more recognize
My quondam pupils than the doctor nods
When certain old acquaintances may cross
His path in Park, or sit down prim beside
His plate at dinner-table: tip nor wink
Scares patients he has put, for reason good,
Under restriction, — maybe, talked sometimes
Of douche or horsewhip to, — for why? because
The gentleman would crazily declare
His best friend was — Iago! Ay, and worse —
The lady, all at once grown lunatic,
In suicidal monomania vowed,
To save her soul, she needs must starve herself!
They're cured now, both, and I tell nobody.
Why don't you speak? Nay, speechless, each of you
Can spare, — without unclasping plighted troth, —
At least one hand to shake! Left-hands will do —
Yours first, my daughter! Ah, it guards — it gripes
The precious Album fast — and prudently!

As well obliterate the record there
On page the last: allow me tear the leaf!
Pray, now! And afterward, to make amends,
What if all three of us contribute each
A line to that prelusive fragment, — help
The embarrassed bard who broke out to break down
Dumbfoundered at such unforeseen success?
'*Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot*'
You begin — *place aux dames!* I'll prompt you then!
'*Here do I take the good the gods allot!*'
Next you, Sir! What, still sulky? Sing, O Muse!
'*Here does my lord in full discharge his shot!*'
Now for the crowning flourish! mine shall be . . ."

"Nothing to match your first effusion, mar
What was, is, shall remain your masterpiece!
Authorship has the alteration-itch!
No, I protest against erasure. Read,
My friend!" (she gasps out). "Read and quickly read
'*Before us death do part*,' what made you mine
And made me yours — the marriage-license here!
Decide if he is like to mend the same!"
And so the lady, white to ghastliness,
Manages somehow to display the page
With left-hand only, while the right retains
The other hand, the young man's, — dreaming-drunk
He, with this drench of stupefying stuff,
Eyes wide, mouth open, — half the idiot's stare
And half the prophet's insight, — holding tight,
All the same, by his one fact in the world —
The lady's right-hand: he but seems to read —
Does not, for certain; yet, how understand
Unless he reads?

So, understand he does,
For certain. Slowly, word by word, *she* reads
Aloud that license — or that warrant, say.

"'*One against two — and two that urge their odds*
To uttermost — I needs must try resource!
Madam, I laid me prostrate, bade you spurn
Body and soul: you spurned and safely spurned
So you had spared me the superfluous taunt
"*Prostration means no power to stand erect,*
Stand, trampling on who trampled — prostrate now!"
So, with my other fool-foe: I was fain
Let the boy touch me with the buttoned foil,
And him the infection gains, he too must needs
Catch up the butcher's cleaver. Be it so!
Since play turns earnest, here's my serious fence.
He loves you; he demands your love: both know
What love means in my language. Love him then!
Pursuant to a pact, love pays my debt:
Therefore, deliver me from him, thereby
Likewise delivering from me yourself!
For, hesitate — much more, refuse consent —
I tell the whole truth to your husband. Flat
Cards lie on table, in our gamester-phrase!
Consent — you stop my mouth, the only way.'

"I did well, trusting instinct: knew your hand
Had never joined with his in fellowship
Over this pact of infamy. You known —
As he was known through every nerve of me.
Therefore I '*stopped his mouth the only way*'
But *my* way! none was left for you, my friend —
The loyal — near, the loved one! No — no — no!
Threaten? Chastise? The coward would but quail.

Conquer who can, the cunning of the snake!
Stamp out his slimy strength from tail to head,
And still you leave vibration of the tongue.
His malice had redoubled — not on me
Who, myself, choose my own refining fire —
But on poor unsuspicious innocence;
And, — victim, — to turn executioner
Also — that feat effected, forky tongue
Had done indeed its office! One snake's 'mouth'
Thus '*open*' — how could mortal '*stop it*'?

"So!"
A tiger-flash — yell, spring, and scream: halloo!
Death's out and on him, has and holds him — ugh!
But *ne trucidet coram populo*
Juvenis senem! Right the Horatian rule!
There, see how soon a quiet comes to pass!

The youth is somehow by the lady's side.
His right-hand grasps her right-hand once again.
Both gaze on the dead body. Hers the word.
"And that was good but useless. Had I lived
The danger was to dread: but, dying now —
Himself would hardly become talkative,
Since talk no more means torture. Fools — what fools
These wicked men are! Had I borne four years,
Four years of weeks and months and days and nights,
Inured me to the consciousness of life
Coiled round by his life, with the tongue to ply, —
But that I bore about me, for prompt use
At urgent need, the thing that '*stops the mouth*'
And stays the venom? Since such need was now
Or never, — how should use not follow need?
Bear witness for me, I withdraw from life

By virtue of the license — warrant, say,
That blackens yet this Album — white again,
Thanks still to my one friend who tears the page!
Now, let me write the line of supplement,
As counselled by my foe there: '*each a line!*'"

And she does falteringly write to end.

"*I die now through the villain who lies dead,*
Righteously slain. He would have outraged me,
So, my defender slew him. God protect
The right! Where wrong lay, I bear witness now.
Let man believe me, whose last breath is spent
In blessing my defender from my soul!"

And so ends the Inn Album.

As she dies,
Begins outside a voice that sounds like song,
And is indeed half song though meant for speech
Muttered in time to motion — stir of heart
That unsubduably must bubble forth
To match the fawn-step as it mounts the stair.

"All's ended and all's over! Verdict found
'*Not guilty*' — prisoner forthwith set free,
Mid cheers the Court pretends to disregard!
Now Portia, now for Daniel, late severe,
At last appeased, benignant! '*This young man* —
Hem — has the young man's foibles but no fault.
He's virgin soil — a friend must cultivate.
I think no plant called "love" grows wild — a friend
May introduce, and name the bloom, the fruit!'
Here somebody dares wave a handkerchief —

She'll want to hide her face with presently!
Good-by then! '*Cigno fedel, cigno fedel,*
Addio!' Now, was ever such mistake —
Ever such foolish ugly omen? Pshaw!
Wagner, beside! '*Amo te solo, te*
Solo amai!' That's worth fifty such!
But, mum, the grave face at the opened door!"

And so the good gay girl, with eyes and cheeks
Diamond and damask, — cheeks so white erewhile
Because of a vague fancy, idle fear
Chased on reflection! — pausing, taps discreet;
And then, to give herself a countenance,
Before she comes upon the pair inside,
Loud — the oft-quoted, long-laughed-over line —
"'*Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot!*'
Open the door!"

No: let the curtain fall!

CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

IN "Bishop Blougram's Apology" and "Christmas-Eve and Easter Day," Browning has covered the main tendencies in religious thought of the nineteenth century in England; and possibly "Caliban" might be included as representative of Calvinistic survivals of the century.

The two most strongly marked of these tendencies have been shown in the Tractarian Movement which took Anglican in the direction of High Churchism and Catholicism, and in the Scientific Movement which led in the direction of Agnosticism.

The battle between the Church of Rome and the Church of England was waged the latter part of the first half of the century, and the greater battle between science and religion came on in its full strength the middle of the century when the influence of Spencer, Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley and other men of science began to make itself felt, as well as

that of such critics of historical Christianity as Strauss in Germany and Renan in France. The influence of the dissenting bodies, — the Presbyterians and the Methodists — also became a power during the century. Broadly speaking, it may be said that the development has been in the direction of the utmost freedom of conscience in the matter of religion, though the struggles of humanity to arrive there even during this century are distressing to look back upon; and occasionally one is held up even in America to-day by the ghost of religious persecution.

It is an open secret that in Bishop Blougram, Browning meant to portray Cardinal Wiseman, whose connection with the Tractarian Movement is of great interest in the history of this movement. Browning enjoyed hugely the joke that Cardinal Wiseman himself reviewed the poem. The Cardinal praised it as a poem, though he did not consider the attitude of a priest of Rome to be properly interpreted. A comparison of the poem with opinions expressed by the Cardinal as well as a glimpse into his activities will show how far Browning has done him justice.

It is well to remember at the outset that the poet's own view is neither that of Blougram nor of the literary man Gigadibs, with whom

Blougram talks over his wine. Gigadibs is an agnostic and cannot understand how a man of Blougram's fine intellectual and artistic perceptions is able so implicitly to believe in Catholic doctrine. Blougram's apology for himself amounts to this, — that he does not believe with absolute certainty any more than does Gigadibs; but, on the other hand, Gigadibs does not disbelieve with absolute certainty, so Blougram's state is one of belief shaken occasionally by doubt, while Gigadibs is one of unbelief shaken by fits of belief.

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

. . . . . .

Now come, let's backward to the starting place.
See my way: we're two college friends, suppose.
Prepare together for our voyage, then;
Each note and check the other in his work, —
There's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticize!
What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

What first, you don't believe, you don't, and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith; and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard:

And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend: well, I do not believe —
If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
You're wrong — I mean to prove it in due time.
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve —
(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then
With both of us, though in unlike degree,
Missing full credence — overboard with them!
I mean to meet you on your own premise:
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and forever, pray?
You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think!
In no wise! all we've gained is, that belief.
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us? — the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides, —
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again, —
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.

There the old misgivings, crooked questions are —
This good God, — what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could — then must have done long since:
If so, when, where and how? some way must be, —
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

The advantage of making belief instead of unbelief the starting point is, Blougram contends, that he lives by what he finds the most to his taste; giving him as it does, power, distinction and beauty in life as well as hope in the life to come.

Well, now, there's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in — which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world —
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend!
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,
Myself — by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, but the tact
To let external forces work for me,
— Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread;
Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride;

It does so, — which for me's a great point gained,
Who have a soul and body that exact
A comfortable care in many ways.
There's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that's born of fear:
While at the same time, there's a taste I have,
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
The naked life is gross till clothed upon:
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take!
An uniform I wear though over-rich —
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore! now folk kneel
And kiss my hand — of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You'll reply,
So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,
We speak of what is; not of what might be,
And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough:

Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives!
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws;
The tailless man exceeds me: but being tailed
I'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?
And that's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools' —
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that.
I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave, — approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way:
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence, — what's its name?)
While the mad houseful's plaudits near outbang
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here —
That even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute; what's to note in that?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;
Him you must watch — he's sure to fall, yet stands!
Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books —
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages, — just the men to shrink
From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there's a thousand diamond weights between?
So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you'll find,
Profess themselves indignant, scandalized
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that's Schelling's way!
It's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago
They'd say, "what's strange? Blougram of course believes;"
And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."
But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet
"How can he?" All eyes turn with interest.
Whereas, step off the line on either side —
You, for example, clever to a fault,

The rough and ready man who write apace,
Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less —
You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?
Lord So-and-so — his coat bedropped with wax,
All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom —
Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?
But I, the man of sense and learning too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
I, to believe at this late time of day!
Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

. . . . . .

"Ay, but since really you lack faith," you cry,
"You run the same risk really on all sides,
In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
No more available to do faith's work
Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!"

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.
We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that!
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:
That's our one act, the previous work's his own.
You criticize the soul? it reared this tree —
This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my finger's ends,

Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself —
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence
Against the thing done to me underground
By hell and all its brood, for aught I know?
I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?
All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this?
It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end, —
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure!
"What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done and said,
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise?
If you desire faith — then you've faith enough:
What else seeks God — nay, what else seek ourselves?
You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,
On hearsay; it's a favourable one:
"But still" (you add), "there was no such good man,
Because of contradiction in the facts.
One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,
This Blougram; yet throughout the tales of him
I see he figures as an Englishman."
Well, the two things are reconcilable.
But would I rather you discovered that,
Subjoining — "Still, what matter though they be?

Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed — you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.
Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth:
I say it's meant to hide him all it can,
And that's what all the blessed evil's for.
Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.
But time and earth case-harden us to live;
The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child
Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.

. . . . . .

The sum of all is — yes, my doubt is great,
My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least

Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can — such points as this.
I won't — that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there's no truth in what I hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife: I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things!
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it, — you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule:
We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
So, other matters equal, we'll revert
To the first problem — which, if solved my way
And thrown into the balance, turns the scale —
How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time
How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
The masses, and regard complacently
"The cabin," in our old phrase. Well, I do.
I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world prizes action, life and talk:
No prejudice to what next world may prove,
Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge
To observe then, is that I observe these now,
Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend,
Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense?

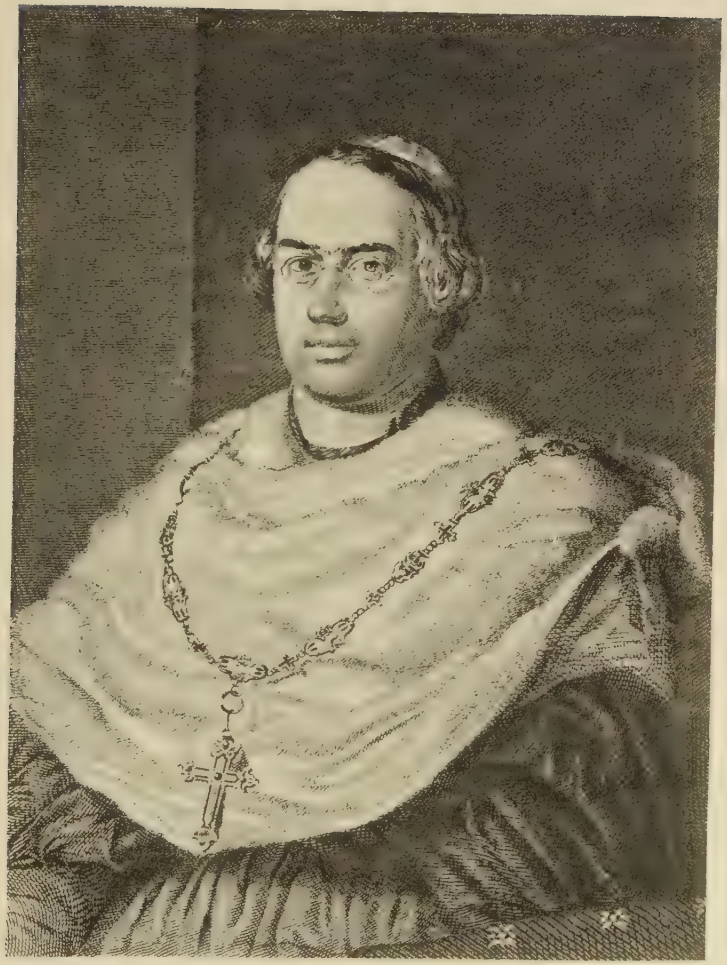
Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still
Losing true life for ever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever being —
In the evolution of successive spheres —
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery
Halfway into the next still, on and off!
As when a traveller, bound from North to South,
Scouts fur in Russia: what's its use in France?
In France spurns flannel: where's its need in Spain?
In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers!
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?

I'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this world.
I take and like its way of life; I think
My brothers, who administer the means,
Live better for my comfort — that's good too;
And God, if he pronounce upon such life,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If he keep silence, — why, for you or me
Or that brute beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times,"
What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

Turning to the life of Cardinal Wiseman, it is of especial interest in connection with Browning's portrayal of him to observe his earlier years. He was born in Spain, having a Spanish father of English descent and an English mother, all Catholics, as Blougram says, "There's one great form of Christian faith I happened to be born in." His mother took him as an infant, and laid him upon the altar of the Cathedral of Seville, and consecrated him to the service of the Church.

His father having died when he was a tiny boy, his mother took him and his brother to England where he was trained at the Catholic college of Ushaw. From there he went to Rome to study at the English Catholic College there. Later he became Rector of this College. The sketch of Wiseman at this period given by his biographer, Wilfred Ward, is most attractive. "Scattered through his 'Rec-

ollections' are interesting impressions left by his student life. While mastering the regular course of scholastic philosophy and theology sufficiently to take his degree with credit, his tastes were not primarily in this direction. The study of Roman antiquities, Christian and Pagan, was congenial to him, as was also the study of Italian art — in which he ultimately became proficient — and of music: and he early devoted himself to the Syriac and Arabic languages. In all these pursuits the enthusiasm and eminence of men living in Rome itself at this era of renaissance was a potent stimulus to work. The hours he set aside for reading were many more than the rule demanded. But the daily walk and the occasional expedition to places of historic interest outside of Rome helped also to store his mind and to fire his imagination." Wiseman writes, himself, of this period, "The life of the student in Rome should be one of unblended enjoyment. His very relaxations become at once subsidiary to his work and yet most delightfully recreative. His daily walks may be through the field of art. . . . his wanderings along the stream of time . . . a thousand memories, a thousand associations accompany him." From this letter and from accounts of him he would seem to have been



Cardinal Wiseman

possessed of a highly imaginative temperament, possibly more artistic than religious. Scholars, linguists, or historians, artists or antiquarians interested him far more than thinkers or theologians. In noting the effects on Wiseman's character of the thoughts and sights of Rome, "it must be observed," writes Ward, "that even the action of directly religious influences brought out his excessive impressionableness. His own inner life was as vivid a pageant to him as the history of the Church. He was liable at this time to the periods of spiritual exaltation—matched, as we shall see later on, by fits of intense despondency — which marked him through life."

This remarkable intellectual activity brought with it doubts of religious truth. "The imaginative delight in Rome as a living witness to the faith entirely left him, and at the same time he was attacked by mental disturbances and doubts of the truth of Christianity. There are contemporary indications, and still plainer accounts in the letters of his later life, of acute suffering from these trials. The study of Biblical criticism, even in the early stages it had then reached, seems immediately to have occasioned them; and the suffering they caused him was aggravated into intense and almost alarming de-

pression by the feebleness of his bodily health." He says, speaking of this phase in his life, "Many and many an hour have I passed, alone, in bitter tears, on the *loggia* of the English College, when every one was reposing in the afternoon, and I was fighting with subtle thoughts and venomous suggestions of a fiendlike infidelity which I durst not confide to any one, for there was no one that could have sympathized with me. This lasted for years; but it made me study and think, to conquer the plague — for I can hardly call it danger — both for myself and for others. But during the actual struggle the simple submission of faith is the only remedy. Thoughts against faith must be treated at the time like temptations against any other virtue — put away; though in cooler moments they may be safely analyzed and unraveled." Again he wrote of these years as, "Years of solitude, of desolation, years of shattered nerves, dread often of instant insanity, consumptive weakness, of sleepless nights and weary days, and hours of tears which no one witnessed."

"Of the effect of these years of desolation on his character he speaks as being simply invaluable. It completed what Ushaw had begun, the training in patience, self-reliance,

and concentration in spite of mental depression. It was amid these trials, he adds, 'that I wrote my "Horæ Syriacæ" and collected my notes for the lectures on the "Connection between Science and Revealed Religion" and the "Eucharist." Without this training I should not have thrown myself into the Puseyite controversy at a later period.' Any usefulness which discovered itself in later years he considers the 'result of self-discipline' during his inner conflict. The struggle so absorbed his energies that his early life was passed almost wholly free from the special trials to which that period is liable. He speaks of his youth as in that respect 'almost temptationless.'" This state of mind seemed to last about five years and then he writes in a letter:

"I have felt myself for some months gradually passing into a new state of mind and heart which I can hardly describe, but which I trust is the last stage of mental progress, in which I hope I may much improve, but out of which I trust I may never pass. I could hardly express the calm mild frame of mind in which I have lived; company and society I have almost entirely shunned, or have moved through it as a stranger; hardly a disturbing thought, hardly a grating sensation has crossed

my being, of which a great feeling of love seems to have been the principle. Whither, I am inclined to ask myself, does all this tend? Whence does it proceed? I think I could make an interesting history of my mind's religious progress, if I may use a word shockingly perverted by modern fanatics, from the hard dry struggles I used to have when first I commenced to study on my own account, to the settling down into a state of stern conviction, and so after some years to the nobler and more soothing evidences furnished by the grand harmonies and beautiful features of religion, whether considered in contact with lower objects or viewed in her own crystal mirror. I find it curious, too, and interesting to trace the workings of those varied feelings upon my relations to the outward world. I remember how for years I lost all relish for the glorious ceremonies of the Church. I heeded not its venerable monuments and sacred records scattered over the city; or I studied them all with the dry eye of an antiquarian, looking in them for proofs, not for sensations, being ever actively alive to the collection of evidences and demonstrations of religious truth. But now that the time of my probation as I hope it was, is past, I feel as though the freshness of childhood's

thoughts had once more returned to me, my heart expands with renewed delight and delicious feelings every time I see the holy objects and practices around me, and I might almost say that I am leading a life of spiritual epicureanism, opening all my senses to a rich draught of religious sensations."

From these glimpses it would appear that Wiseman was a much more sincere man in his religious feeling than he is given credit for by Browning. His belief is with him not a matter of cold, hard calculation as to the attitude which will be, so to speak, the most politic from both a worldly and a spiritual point of view. The beautiful passage beginning "Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch" etc., comes nearer to the genuine enthusiasm of a Wiseman than any other in the poem. There is an essential difference between the minds of the poet and the man he portrays, which perhaps made it impossible for Browning fully to interpret Wiseman's attitude. Both have religious fervor, but Browning's is born of a consciousness of God revealed directly to himself, while Wiseman's consciousness of God comes to him primarily through the authority of the Church, that is through generations of authoritative believers the first of whom experienced the actuality of

Revelation. Hundreds and thousands of people have minds of this caliber. They cannot see a truth direct for themselves, they must be told by some person clothed in authority that this or that is true or false. To Wiseman the beauty of his own form of religion with its special dogmas made so strong an appeal, that, since he could only believe through authority, under any circumstances, it was natural to him to adopt the particular form that gave him the most satisfaction. Proofs detrimental to belief do not worry long with doubts such a mind, because the authority they depend on is not the authority of knowledge, but the authority of belief. This comes out clearly enough in one of Wiseman's letters in which after enumerating a number of proofs brought forward by various scholars tending to cast discredit on the dogmas of the Church, he triumphantly exclaims, "And yet, who that has an understanding to judge, is driven for a moment from the holdings of faith by such comparisons as these!"

Upon looking through his writings there will always be found in his expression of belief, I think, that ring of true sincerity as well as what I should call an intense artistic delight in the essential beauty of his religion.

SACRED HEART *F. Utenbach*

As to Blougram's argument that he believed in living in the world while he was in it, Wiseman's life was certainly not that of a worldling alone, though he is described by one person as being "a genuine priest, very good looking and able bodied, and with much apparent practice in the world." He was far too much of a student and worker to be altogether so worldly-minded as Browning represents him.

His chief interest for Englishmen is his connection with the Tractarian Movement. The wish of his soul was to aid the Catholic Revival in England, and with that end in view he visited England in 1835. Two years before, the movement at Oxford, known as the Tractarian Movement had begun. The opinions of the men in this movement were, as every one knows, printed in a series of ninety tracts of which Newman wrote twenty-four. It was an outgrowth of the conditions of the time. To sum up in the words of Withrow,[1] "The Church of England had distinctly lost ground as a directing and controlling force in the nation. The most thoughtful and earnest minds in the Church felt the need of a great religious awakening and an aggressive movement to regain its

[1] Religious Progress of the Century.

lost influence." As Dean Church describes them, the two characteristic forms of Christianity in the Church of England were the High Church, and the Evangelicals, or Low Church." Of the former he says: "Its better members were highly cultivated, benevolent men, intolerant of irregularities both of doctrine and life, whose lives were governed by an unostentatious but solid and unfaltering piety, ready to burst forth on occasion into fervid devotion. Its worse members were jobbers and hunters after preferment, pluralists who built fortunes and endowed families out of the Church, or country gentlemen in orders, who rode to hounds and shot and danced and farmed, and often did worse things."

But at Oxford was a group of men of intense moral earnestness including Newman, Pusey, Keble, Arnold, Maurice, Kingsley, and others, who began an active propaganda of the new or revised doctrines of the Oxford Movement.

"The success of the Tracts," says Molesworth, "was much greater, and the outcry against them far louder and fiercer, than their authors had expected. The Tracts were at first small and simple, but became large and learned theological treatises. Changes, too,

came over the views of some of the writers. Doctrines which probably would have shocked them at first were put forward with a recklessness which success had increased. Alarm was excited, remonstrances stronger and stronger were addressed to them. They were attacked as Romanizing in their tendency."

"The effect of such writing was two-fold —[1] the public were dismayed and certain members of the Tractarian party avowed their intention of becoming Romanists. So decided was the setting of the tide towards Rome that Newman made a vigorous effort to turn it by his famous Tract No. 90. In this he endeavored to show that it was possible to interpret the Thirty-nine Articles in the interest of Roman Catholicism. This tract aroused a storm of indignation. The violent controversy which it occasioned led to the discontinuance of the series."

Such in little was this remarkable movement. When Tract No. 90 appeared Wiseman had been in England for some time, and had been a strong influence in taking many thinking men in the direction of Rome. His lectures and discourses upon his first visit to England had attracted remarkable attention. The account runs by one who attended his

[1] See Withrow.

lectures to Catholics and Protestants: "Society in this country was impressed, and listened almost against its will, and listened not displeased. Here was a young Roman priest, fresh from the center of Catholicism, who showed himself master, not only of the intricacies of polemical discussion but of the amenities of civilized life. The spacious church of Moorfields was thronged on every evening of Dr. Wiseman's appearance. Many persons of position and education were converted, and all departed with abated prejudice, and with very different notions about Catholicism from those with which they had been prepossessed by their education." Wiseman, himself, wrote, "I had the consolation of witnessing the patient and edifying attention of a crowded audience, many of whom stood for two hours without any symptom of impatience."

The great triumph for Wiseman, however, was when, shortly after Tract 90, Newman, "a man," described "in many ways, the most remarkable that England has seen during the century, perhaps the most remarkable whom the English Church has produced in any century," went over to the Church of Rome and was confirmed by Wiseman. Others followed his example and by 1853 as many as four

hundred clergymen and laity had become Roman Catholics.

The controversies and discussions of that time, it must be remembered, were more upon the dogmas of the church than upon what we should call to-day the essential truths of religion. Yet, to a certain order of mind dogmas seem important truths. There are those whose religious attitude cannot be preserved without belief in dogmas, and the advantage of the Catholic Church is that it holds firmly to its dogmas, come what may. It was expected, however, that this Romeward Movement would arouse intense antipathy. "The arguments by which it was justified were considered, in many cases, disingenuous, if not Jesuitical."

In opposition of this sort we come nearer to Browning's attitude of mind. Because such arguments as Wiseman and the Tractarians used could not convince him, he takes the ordinary ground of the opposition, that in using such arguments they must be insincere, and they must be perfectly conscious of their insincerity. Still, in spite of the fact that Browning's mind could not get inside of Blougram's, he shows that he has some sympathy for the Bishop in the close of the poem where he says, "He said true things but called

them by wrong names." Raise Blougram's philosophy to the plane of the mysticism of a Browning, and the arguments for belief would be much the same but the *counters* in the arguments would become symbols instead of dogmas.

In "Christmas-Eve and Easter Day," Browning becomes the true critic of the nineteenth-century religious movements. He passes in review in a series of dramatic pictures the three most diverse modes of religious thought of the century. The dissenter's view is symbolized by a scene in a very humble chapel in England, the Catholic view by a vision of high mass at St. Peter's and the Agnostic view by a vision of a lecture by a learned German professor, — while the view of the modern mystic who remains religious in the face of all destructive criticism is shown in the speaker of the poem. The intuitional, aspiring side of his nature is symbolized by the vision of Christ that appears to him, while the intensity of its power fluctuates as he either holds fast or lets go the garment of Christ. Opposed to his intuitional side is his reasoning side.

Possibly the picture of the dissenting chapel is exaggeratedly humble, though if we suppose it to be a Methodist Chapel, it may be

true to life, as Methodism was the form of religion which made its appeal to the lowest classes. Indeed, at the time of its first successes, it was the saving grace of England. "But for the moral antiseptic," writes Withrow, "furnished by Methodism, and the revival of religion in all the churches which it produced, the history of England would have been far other than it was. It would probably have been swept into the maelstrom of revolution and shared the political and religious convulsions of the neighboring nation," that is the French Revolution.

"But Methodism had greatly changed the condition of the people. It had rescued vast multitudes from ignorance and barbarism, and raised them from almost the degradation of beasts to the condition of men and the fellowship of saints. The habits of thrift and industry which it fostered led to the accumulation, if not of wealth, at least to that of a substantial competence; and built up that safeguard of the Commonwealth, a great, intelligent, industrious, religious Middle-Class in the community."

After the death of Wesley came various divisions in the Methodist Church; it has so flexible a system that it may be adapted to very varied needs of humanity, and in that

has consisted its great power. The mission of the church was originally to the poor and lowly, but "It has won for itself in spite of scorn and persecution," says Dr. Schöll, "a place of power in the State and church of Great Britain."

A scornful attitude is vividly brought before us in the opening of this poem, to be succeeded later by a more charitable point of view.

CHRISTMAS–EVE

I

Out of the little chapel I burst
  Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes full, I waited first
  In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre
  At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter.
  Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
  Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
  One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Six feet long by three feet wide,
Partitioned off from the vast inside —

THE NATIVITY *Fra Lippo Lippi*

I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy; the rain kept driving.
They eyed me much as some wild beast,
That congregation, still arriving,
Some of them by the main road, white
A long way past me into the night,
Skirting the common, then diverging;
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,
— They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder; —
But the most turned in yet more abruptly
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
Which now the little chapel rallies
And leads into day again, — its priestliness
Lending itself to hide their beastliness
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
That, where you cross the common as I did,
And meet the party thus presided,
"Mount Zion" with Love-lane at the back of it,
They front you as little disconcerted
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
And her wicked people made to mind him,
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

II

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common
In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
Her umbrella with a mighty report,

Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
Like a startled horse, at the interloper
(Who humbly knew himself improper,
But could not shrink up small enough)
— Round to the door, and in, — the gruff
Hinge's invariable scold
Making my very blood run cold.
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many-tattered
Little old-faced peaking sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on:
Then, stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
Close on her heels, the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
With lips as much too white, as a streak
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man, like the *Penitent Thief*,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.

And, except from him, from each that entered,
I got the same interrogation —
"What, you the alien, you have ventured
To take with us, the elect, your station?
A carer for none of it, a *Gallio!*" —
Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho.
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,
The draught, it always sent in shutting,
Made the flame of the single tallow candle
In the cracked square lantern I stood under,
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:
I verily fancied the zealous light
(In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
With the airs of a Saint John's Candlestick.
There was no standing it much longer.
"Good folks," thought I, as resolve grew stronger,
"This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor
When the weather sends you a chance visitor?
You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!
But still, despite the pretty perfection
To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
And, taking God's word under wise protection,
Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
And bid one reach it over hot plough-shares, —
Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,
If I should choose to cry, as now, 'Shares!' —
See if the best of you bars me my ration!
I prefer, if you please, for my expounder
Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder;

Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest
  Supposing I don the marriage vestiment:
  So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,
And carve me my portion at your quickliest!"
Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad
  With wizened face in want of soap,
  And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
And so avoid disturbing the preacher)
— Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
At the shutting door, and entered likewise,
Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
  And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
  And found myself in full conventicle,
— To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
  Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
  Found all assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III

I very soon had enough of it.
  The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbor's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
  Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
  Of the preaching man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
  To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
  To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:
  No sooner our friend had got an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,

(Whene'er 'twas the thought first struck him,
How death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench)
Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
  As to hug the book of books to pieces:
And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
  Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,
Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt yours, —
So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
  Nay, had but a single face of my neighbors
  Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labors
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'Tis odds but I might have borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered
  Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
  Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
  And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
While she, to his periods keeping measure,
  Maternally devoured the pastor.
The man with the handkerchief untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking!
My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it;
  So, saying like Eve when she plucked the apple,

"I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,"
I flung out of the little chapel.

IV

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
  In the wind too; the moon was risen,
And would have shone out pure and full,
  But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
Block on block built up in the West,
For what purpose the wind knows best,
Who changes his mind continually.
And the empty other half of the sky
Seemed in its silence as if it knew
What, any moment, might look through
A chance gap in that fortress massy: —
  Through its fissures you got hints
  Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
Now, a dull lion-color, now, brassy
Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
Like furnace-smoke just ere flames bellow,
All a-simmer with intense strain
To let her through, — then blank again,
At the hope of her appearance failing.
Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
Shows a narrow path directly across;
'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss —
Besides, you go gently all the way uphill.
  I stooped under and soon felt better;
My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple,
  As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.
My mind was full of the scene I had left,
  That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
  — How this outside was pure and different!
The sermon, now — what a mingled weft

Of good and ill! Were either less,
  Its fellow had colored the whole distinctly;
But alas for the excellent earnestness,
  And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
However to pastor and flock's contentment!
Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,
  With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
Till how could you know them, grown double their size
  In the natural fog of the good man's mind,
Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
Haloed about with the common's damps?
Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover;
  The zeal was good, and the aspiration;
And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
  Pharaoh received no demonstration,
By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
Of the doctrine of the Trinity, —
Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
Apparently his hearers relished it
With so unfeigned a gust — who knows if
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?
But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them!
  These people have really felt, no doubt,
A something, the motion they style the *Call* of them;
  And this is their method of bringing about,
By a mechanism of words and tones,
(So many texts in so many groans)
A sort of reviving and reproducing,
  More or less perfectly, (who can tell?)
The mood itself, which strengthens by using;
  And how that happens, I understand well.
A tune was born in my head last week,
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek

Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester;
And when, next week, I take it back again,
My head will sing to the engine's clack again,
While it only makes my neighbor's haunches stir,
— Finding no dormant musical sprout
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.
'Tis the taught already that profits by teaching;
He gets no more from the railway's preaching
Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I:
Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous eye on.
Still, why paint over their door "Mount Zion,"
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

The reasoning which follows upon this is characteristic of Browning. Perceiving everywhere in the world transcendent power, and knowing love in little, from that transcendent love may be deduced. His reasoning finally brings him to a state of vision. His subjective intuitions become palpable objective symbols, a not infrequent occurrence in highly wrought and sensitive minds.

V

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
Does the self-same weary thing take place?
The same endeavor to make you believe,
And with much the same effect, no more:
Each method abundantly convincing,
As I say, to those convinced before,
But scarce to be swallowed without wincing

By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
I have my own church equally:
And in this church my faith sprang first!
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,
And the wind began again, with a burst
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
I entered his church-door, nature leading me)
— In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, his visible power;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean: God's all, man's nought:
But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
Man's very elements from man,
Saying, "But all is God's" — whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
But able to glorify him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,

Made perfect as a thing of course.
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock:
And, looking to God who ordained divorce
Of the rock from his boundless continent,
Sees, in his power made evident,
Only excess by a million-fold
O'er the power God gave man in the mould.
For, note: man's hand, first formed to carry
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry
Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain,
— Advancing in power by one degree;
And why count steps through eternity?
But love is the ever-springing fountain:
Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
For the water's play, but the water-head —
How can he multiply or reduce it?
As easy create it, as cause it to cease;
He may profit by it, or abuse it,
But 'tis not a thing to bear increase
As power does: be love less or more
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but
Love's sum remains what it was before.
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
As seen through power, ever above
All modes which make it manifest,
My soul brought all to a single test —
That he, the Eternal First and Last,
Who, in his power, had so surpassed
All man conceives of what is might, —
Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
— Would prove as infinitely good;
Would never, (my soul understood,)

With power to work all love desires,
Bestow e'en less than man requires;
That he who endlessly was teaching,
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
What love can do in the leaf or stone,
(So that to master this alone,
This done in the stone or leaf for me,
I must go on learning endlessly)
Would never need that I, in turn,
  Should point him out defect unheeded,
And show that God had yet to learn
  What the meanest human creature needed,
— Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
Tracking his way through doubts and fears,
While the stupid earth on which I stay
  Suffers no change, but passive adds
  Its myriad years to myriads,
Though I, he gave it to, decay,
Seeing death come and choose about me,
And my dearest ones depart without me.
No: love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
  Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
  Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
And I shall behold thee, face to face,
O God, and in thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast thou!
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
I shall find as able to satiate
  The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
  With this sky of thine, that I now walk under,
And glory in thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus! Oh, let men keep their ways

Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine —
Be this my way! And this is mine!

VI

For lo, what think you? suddenly
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
Received at once the full fruition
Of the moon's consummate apparition.
The black cloud-barricade was riven,
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
Deep in the West; while, bare and breathless,
North and South and East lay ready
For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
Sprang across them and stood steady.
'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
It rose, distinctly at the base
With its seven proper colors chorded,
Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white, —
Above which intervened the night.
But above night too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequence,
Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier and flightier, —
Rapture dying along its verge.
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that arc?

VII

This sight was shown me, there and then, —
Me, one out of a world of men,
Singled forth, as the chance might hap
To another if, in a thunderclap
Where I heard noise and you saw flame,
Some one man knew God called his name.
For me, I think I said, "Appear!
Good were it to be ever here.
If thou wilt, let me build to thee
Service-tabernacles three,
Where, forever in thy presence,
In ecstatic acquiescence,
Far alike from thriftless learning
And ignorance's undiscerning,
I may worship and remain!"
  Thus at the show above me, gazing
With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
  Glutted with the glory, blazing
Throughout its whole mass, over and under
Until at length it burst asunder
And out of it bodily there streamed,
The too-much glory, as it seemed,
Passing from out me to the ground,
Then palely serpentining round
Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII

All at once I looked up with terror.
He was there.
He himself with his human air.
On the narrow pathway, just before.
I saw the back of him, no more —
He had left the chapel, then, as I.

I forgot all about the sky.
No face: only the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognize.
I felt terror, no surprise;
My mind filled with the cataract,
At one bound of the mighty fact.
"I remember, he did say
  Doubtless that, to this world's end,
Where two or three should meet and pray,
  He would be in the midst, their friend;
Certainly he was there with them!"
  And my pulses leaped for joy
  Of the golden thought without alloy,
That I saw his very vesture's hem.
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear,
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear;
And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
To the salvation of the vest,
"But not so, Lord! It cannot be
That thou, indeed, art leaving me —
Me, that have despised thy friends!
Did my heart make no amends?
Thou art the love *of God* — above
His power, didst hear me place his love,
And that was leaving the world for thee.
Therefore thou must not turn from me
As I had chosen the other part!
Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
Our best is bad, nor bears thy test;
Still, it should be our very best.
I thought it best that thou, the spirit,
  Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
And in beauty, as even we require it—

Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
I left but now, as scarcely fitted
For thee: I knew not what I pitied.
But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
What is it to thee, who curest sinning?
Am I not weak as thou art strong?
I have looked to thee from the beginning,
Straight up to thee through all the world
Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
To nothingness on either side:
And since the time thou wast descried,
Spite of the weak heart, so have I
Lived ever, and so fain would die,
Living and dying, thee before!
But if thou leavest me ——"

IX

Less or more,
I suppose that I spoke thus.
When, — have mercy, Lord, on us!
The whole face turned upon me full.
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it
In the cleansing sun, his wool, —
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discolored web —
So lay I, saturate with brightness.
And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On, just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion:

What shall I say? — as a path were hollowed
  And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as through
I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals, —
"So he said, so it befalls.
God who registers the cup
  Of mere cold water, for his sake
To a disciple rendered up,
  Disdains not his own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered:
And because my heart I proffered,
With true love trembling at the brim,
He suffers me to follow him
For ever, my own way, — dispensed
From seeking to be influenced
By all the less immediate ways
  That earth, in worships manifold,
Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
  The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold!"

The vision of high mass at St. Peters in Rome is the antipode of the little Methodist Chapel. The Catholic Church is the church of all others which has gathered about itself the marvels of art in sculpture, painting and music. As the chapel depressed with its ugliness, the great cathedral entrances with its beauty.

THE TRANSFIGURATION *Fra Angelico*

X

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
For where am I, in city or plain,
Since I am 'ware of the world again?
And what is this that rises propped
With pillars of prodigious girth?
Is it really on the earth,
This miraculous Dome of God?
Has the angel's measuring-rod
Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
Meted it out, — and what he meted,
Have the sons of men completed?
— Binding, ever as he bade,
Columns in the colonnade
With arms wide open to embrace
The entry of the human race
To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,
Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
With marble for brick, and stones of price
For garniture of the edifice?
Now I see; it is no dream;
It stands there and it does not seem;
For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
And thus I have read of it in books
Often in England, leagues away,
And wondered how these fountains play,
Growing up eternally
Each to a musical water-tree,
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.
Liar and dreamer in your teeth!

I, the sinner that speak to you,
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew
Both this and more. For see, for see,
The dark is rent, mine eye is free
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
And I view inside, and all there, all,
As the swarming hollow of a hive,
The whole Basilica alive!
Men in the chancel, body and nave,
Men on the pillars' architrave,
Men on the statues, men on the tombs
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,
All famishing in expectation
Of the main-altar's consummation.
For see, for see, the rapturous moment
Approaches, and earth's best endowment
Blends with heaven's; the taper-fires
Pant up, the winding brazen spires
Heave loftier yet the baldachin;
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant
Holds his breath and grovels latent,
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
(Like Behemoth when he praised him)
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
On the sudden pavement strewed
With faces of the multitude.
Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain

Up yonder on the accursed tree, —
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,
As His servant John received the words,
"I died, and live for evermore!"

XI

Yet I was left outside the door.
"Why sit I here on the threshold-stone
Left till He return, alone
Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold?"
My reason, to my doubt, replied,
As if a book were opened wide,
And at a certain page I traced
Every record undefaced,
Added by successive years, —
The harvestings of truth's stray ears
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
Bound together for belief.
Yes, I said — that he will go
And sit with these in turn, I know.
Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims
Too giddily to guide her limbs,
Disabled by their palsy-stroke
From propping mine. Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies:
And he, whose eye detects a spark
Even where, to man's the whole seems dark,

May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because himself discerns all ways
Open to reach him: I, a man
Able to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the founder's base:
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,
Awaiting his return outside.
— 'Twas thus my reason straight replied
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried — What has been abusing me
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?
Do these men praise him? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise!
I see the error; but above
The scope of error, see the love. —
Oh, love of those first Christian days!
— Fanned so soon into a blaze,
From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled

From the throne he reigned upon:
You looked up and he was gone.
Gone, his glory of the pen!
— Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
Bade her scribes abhor the trick
Of poetry and rhetoric,
And exult with hearts set free,
In blessed imbecility
Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet
Leaving Sallust incomplete.
Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter!
— Love, while able to acquaint her
While the thousand statues yet
Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
From brush, she saw on every side,
Chose rather with an infant's pride
To frame those portents which impart
Such unction to true Christian Art.
Gone, music too! The air was stirred
By happy wings: Terpander's bird
(That, when the cold came, fled away)
Would tarry not the wintry day, —
As more-enduring sculpture must,
Till filthy saints rebuked the gust
With which they chanced to get a sight
Of some dear naked Aphrodite
They glanced a thought above the toes of,
By breaking zealously her nose off.
Love, surely, from that music's lingering,
Might have filched her organ-fingering,
Nor chosen rather to set prayings
To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.
Love was the startling thing, the new:
Love was the all-sufficient too;

And seeing that, you see the rest:
As a babe can find its mother's breast
As well in darkness as in light,
Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.
True, the world's eyes are open now:
— Less need for me to disallow
Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,
Peevish as ever to be suckled,
Lulled by the same old baby-prattle
With intermixture of the rattle,
When she would have them creep, stand steady
Upon their feet, or walk already,
Not to speak of trying to climb.
I will be wise another time,
And not desire a wall between us,
When next I see a church-roof cover
So many species of one genus,
All with foreheads bearing *lover*
Written above the earnest eyes of them;
All with breasts that beat for beauty,
Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
In noble daring, steadfast duty,
The heroic in passion, or in action, —
Or, lowered for sense's satisfaction,
To the mere outside of human creatures,
Mere perfect form and faultless features.
What? with all Rome here, whence to levy
Such contributions to their appetite,
With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
They take, as it were, a padlock, clap it tight
On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding
On the glories of their ancient reading,
On the beauties of their modern singing,
On the wonders of the builder's bringing,

On the majesties of Art around them, —
And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,
When faith has at last united and bound them,
They offer up to God for a present?
Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it, —
And, only taking the act in reference
To the other recipients who might have allowed it,
I will rejoice that God had the preference.

XII

So I summed up my new resolves:
Too much love there can never be.
And where the intellect devolves
Its function on love exclusively,
I, a man who possesses both,
Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
— Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,
That my intellect may find its share.

In his next experience the speaker learns what the effect of scientific criticism has been upon historical Christianity.

The warfare between science and religion forms one of the most fascinating and terrible chapters in the annals of the development of the human mind. About the middle of the nineteenth century the war became general. It was no longer a question of a skirmish over this or that particular discovery in science which would cause some long-cherished dogma to totter; it was a full battle all along the line, and now that the smoke has cleared away, it

is safe to say that science sees, on the one hand, it cannot conquer religion, and religion sees, on the other, it cannot conquer science. What each has done is to strip the other of its untruths, leaving its truths to grow by the light each holds up for the other. Together they advance toward the knowledge of the Most High.

XIII

No sooner said than out in the night!
My heart beat lighter and more light:
And still, as before, I was walking swift,
  With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
  Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On just before me, still to be followed,
  As it carried me after with its motion,
— What shall I say? — as a path were hollowed,
  And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV

Alone! I am left alone once more —
  (Save for the garment's extreme fold
  Abandoned still to bless my hold)
Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple, — perhaps a college,
— Like nothing I ever saw before
At home in England, to my knowledge.
The tall old quaint irregular town!

It may be . . . though which, I can't affirm . . . any
Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;
And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort
Or Göttingen, I have to thank for 't?
It may be Göttingen, — most likely.
Through the open door I catch obliquely
Glimpses of a lecture-hall;
And not a bad assembly neither,
Ranged decent and symmetrical
On benches, waiting what's to see there;
Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
I also resolve to see with them,
Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
The chance of joining in fellowship
With any that call themselves his friends;
As these folk do, I have a notion.
But hist — a buzzing and emotion!
All settle themselves, the while ascends
By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
Step by step, deliberate
Because of his cranium's over-freight,
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
If I have proved an accurate guesser,
The hawk-nosed high-cheek-boned Professor.
I felt at once as if there ran
A shoot of love from my heart to the man —
That sallow virgin-minded studious
Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
That woke my sympathetic spasm,
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
And stood, surveying his auditory
With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial, —

Those blue eyes had survived so much!
While, under the foot they could not smutch,
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats
Was done with, died into a silence;
And, when each glance was upward sent,
Each bearded mouth composed intent,
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence, —
He pushed back higher his spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
And giving his head of hair — a hake
Of undressed tow, for color and quantity —
One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own Young England adjusts a jaunty tie
When about to impart, on mature digestion,
Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
— The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

XV

And he began it by observing
How reason dictated that men
Should rectify the natural swerving,
By a reversion, now and then,
To the well-heads of knowledge, few
And far away, whence rolling grew
The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
Commingled, as we needs must think,
With waters alien to the source;
To do which, aimed this eve's discourse;
Since, where could be a fitter time
For tracing backward to its prime
This Christianity, this lake,

This reservoir, whereat we slake,
From one or other bank, our thirst?
So, he proposed inquiring first
Into the various sources whence
  This Myth of Christ is derivable;
Demanding from the evidence,
  (Since plainly no such life was liveable)
How these phenomena should class?
Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,
Or never was at all, or whether
He was and was not, both together —
It matters little for the name,
So the idea be left the same.
Only, for practical purpose's sake,
'Twas obviously as well to take
The popular story, — understanding
  How the ineptitude of the time,
And the penman's prejudice, expanding
  Fact into fable fit for the clime,
Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it
  Into this myth, this Individuum, —
Which, when reason had strained and abated it
  Of foreign matter, left, for residuum,
A man! — a right true man, however,
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavor:
Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient
  To his disciples, for rather believing
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
  As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
His word, their tradition, — which, though it meant
Something entirely different
From all that those who only heard it,
In their simplicity thought and averred it,
Had yet a meaning quite as respectable:

For, among other doctrines delectable,
Was he not surely the first to insist on
  The natural sovereignty of our race? —
  Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.
And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,
Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,
The vesture still within my hand.

XVI

I could interpret its command.
This time he would not bid me enter
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
Impregnating its pristine clarity,
— One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
  Its gust of broken meat and garlic;
— One, by his soul's too-much presuming
To turn the frankincense's fuming
  And vapors of the candle starlike
Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
  Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
  May poison it for healthy breathing —
But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom, and leaves you — vacuity.
Thus much of Christ does he reject?
And what retain? His intellect?
What is it I must reverence duly?
Poor intellect for worship, truly,
Which tells me simply what was told
  (If mere morality, bereft
  Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)

Elsewhere by voices manifold;
With this advantage, that the stater
  Made nowise the important stumble
  Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity:
  But how does shifting blame, evade it?
Have wisdom's words no more felicity?
  The stumbling-block, his speech — who laid it?
How comes it that for one found able
To sift the truth of it from fable,
Millions believe it to the letter?
Christ's goodness, then — does that fare better?
Strange goodness, which upon the score
  Of being goodness, the mere due
Of man to fellow-man, much more
  To God, — should take another view
Of its possessor's privilege,
And bid him rule his race! You pledge
Your fealty to such rule? What, all —
From heavenly John and Attic Paul,
And that brave weather-battered Peter,
Whose stout faith only stood completer
For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
As, more his hands hauled nets, they hardened, —
All, down to you, the man of men,
Professing here at Göttingen,
Compose Christ's flock! They, you and I,
Are sheep of a good man! And why?
The goodness, — how did he acquire it?
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it?
Choose which; then tell me, on what ground
Should its possessor dare propound
His claim to rise o'er us an inch?

Were goodness all some man's invention,
Who arbitrarily made mention
What we should follow, and whence flinch, —
What qualities might take the style
Of right and wrong, — and had such guessing
Met with as general acquiescing
As graced the alphabet erewhile,
When A got leave an Ox to be,
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,
For thus inventing thing and title
Worship were that man's fit requital.
But if the common conscience must
Be ultimately judge, adjust
Its apt name to each quality
Already known, — I would decree
Worship for such mere demonstration
And simple work of nomenclature,
Only the day I praised, not nature,
But Harvey, for the circulation.
I would praise such a Christ, with pride
And joy, that he, as none beside,
Had taught us how to keep the mind
God gave him, as God gave his kind,
Freer than they from fleshly taint:
I would call such a Christ our Saint,
As I declare our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim:
A thousand poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare: each shall take
His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake —
Though some objected — "Had we seen
The heart and head of each, what screen
Was broken there to give them light,

While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
We should no more admire, perchance,
That these found truth out at a glance,
Than marvel how the bat discerns
Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
Led by a finer tact, a gift
He boasts, which other birds must shift
Without, and grope as best they can."
No, freely I would praise the man, —
Nor one whit more, if he contended
That gift of his, from God descended.
Ah friend, what gift of man's does not?
No nearer something, by a jot,
Rise an infinity of nothings
  Than one: take Euclid for your teacher:
Distinguish kinds: do crownings, clothings,
  Make that creator which was creature?
Multiply gifts upon man's head,
And what, when all's done, shall be said
But — the more gifted he, I ween!
  That one's made Christ, this other, Pilate,
And this might be all that has been, —
  So what is there to frown or smile at?
What is left for us, save, in growth
Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity?

XVII

Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
Though he is so bright and we so dim,

We are made in his image to witness him:
And were no eye in us to tell,
  Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,
  That light would want its evidence, —
Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship, therefore:
And, if no better proof you will care for,
— Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
  Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
  In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better — true, but my fact is,
'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
  For practising what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
  As the God in Christ, do you waive, and "heady,
High-minded," hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?
Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
  Why need we prove would avail no jot
  To make him God, if God he were not?
What is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run "Believe in good,
In justice, truth, now understand
For the first time?" — or, "Believe in me,

Who lived and died, yet essentially
Am Lord of Life?" Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
Conceive of the love, — that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII

Can it be that he stays inside?
  Is the vesture left me to commune with?
  Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
Even at this lecture, if she tried?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathize
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain's white roots
Without throb for Christ's attributes,
As the lecturer makes his special boast!
If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.
Admire we, how from heart to brain
  (Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)
One instinct rises and falls again,
  Restoring the equilibrium.
And how when the Critic had done his best,
And the pearl of price, at reason's test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the Professor's lecture-table, —
When we looked for the inference and monition
That our faith, reduced to such condition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole, —
  He bids us, when we least expect it,
Take back our faith, — if it be not just whole,
  Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
Which fact pays damage done rewardingly,

So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly!
"Go home and venerate the myth
I thus have experimented with —
This man, continue to adore him
Rather than all who went before him,
And all who ever followed after!" —
  Surely for this I may praise you, my brother!
Will you take the praise in tears or laughter?
  That's one point gained: can I compass another?
Unlearned love was safe from spurning —
Can't we respect your loveless learning?
Let us at least give learning honor!
What laurels had we showered upon her,
Girding her loins up to perturb
Our theory of the Middle Verb;
Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar
O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter;
Or curing the halt and maimed 'Iketides,'
While we lounged on at our indebted ease:
Instead of which, a tricksy demon
Sets her at Titus or Philemon!
When ignorance wags his ears of leather
And hates God's word, 'tis altogether;
Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
— And you, the audience, who might ravage
The world wide, enviably savage,
Nor heed the cry of the retriever,
More than Herr Heine (before his fever), —
I do not tell a lie so arrant
  As say my passion's wings are furled up,
And, without plainest heavenly warrant,
  I were ready and glad to give the world up —
But still, when you rub brow meticulous,

And ponder the profit of turning holy
If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
— God forbid I should find you ridiculous!
Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
"Christians," — abhor the deist's pravity, —
Go on, you shall no more move my gravity
Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse,
I find it in my heart to embarrass them
By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,
And they really carry what they say carries them.

XIX

So sat I talking with my mind.
I did not long to leave the door
And find a new church, as before,
But rather was quiet and inclined
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting
From further tracking and trying and testing.
"This tolerance is a genial mood!"
(Said I, and a little pause ensued).
"One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
A value for religion's self,
A carelessness about the sects of it.
Let me enjoy my own conviction,
Not watch my neighbor's faith with fretfulness,
Still spying there some dereliction
Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness!
Better a mild indifferentism,
Teaching that both our faiths (though duller
His shine through a dull spirit's prism)
Originally had one color!
Better pursue a pilgrimage

Through ancient and through modern times
To many peoples, various climes,
Where I may see saint, savage, sage
Fuse their respective creeds in one
Before the general Father's throne!"

XX

— 'Twas the horrible storm began afresh!
The black night caught me in his mesh,
Whirled me up, and flung me prone.
I was left on the college-step alone.
I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
Far, far away, the receding gesture,
And looming of the lessening vesture! —
Swept forward from my stupid hand,
While I watched my foolish heart expand
In the lazy glow of benevolence,
O'er the various modes of man's belief.
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
Needs must there be one way, our chief
Best way of worship: let me strive
To find it, and when found, contrive
My fellows also take their share!
This constitutes my earthly care:
God's is above it and distinct.
For I, a man, with men am linked
And not a brute with brutes; no gain
That I experience, must remain
Unshared: but should my best endeavor
To share it, fail — subsisteth ever
God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult,
May — doth, I will believe — bring back
All wanderers to a single track.

Meantime, I can but testify
God's care for me — no more, can I —
It is but for myself I know;
  The world rolls witnessing around me
  Only to leave me as it found me;
Men cry there, but my ear is slow:
Their races flourish or decay
— What boots it, while yon lucid way
Loaded with stars divides the vault?
But soon my soul repairs its fault
When, sharpening sense's hebetude,
She turns on my own life! So viewed,
No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense
With witnessings of providence:
And woe to me if when I look
Upon that record, the sole book
Unsealed to me, I take no heed
Of any warning that I read!
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from heaven slid
Into my soul? I cannot bid
The world admit he stooped to heal
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
I only knew he named my name:
But what is the world to me, for sorrow
Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow
It drops the remark, with just-turned head
Then, on again, "That man is dead"?
Yes, but for me — my name called, — drawn
As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,
He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:
Bid out of life by a nod, a glance, —

Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance, —
With a rapid finger circled round,
Fixed to the first poor inch of ground
To fight from, where his foot was found;
Whose ear but a minute since lay free
To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry —
Summoned, a solitary man
To end his life where his life began,
From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van!
Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
By the hem of the vesture! —

XXI

And I caught
At the flying robe, and unrepelled
Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung,
Out of the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

He finds himself back in the chapel, all that has occurred having been a vision. His conclusions have that broadness of view which belongs only to those most advanced in thought. He has learned that not only must there be the essential truth behind every sincere effort to reach it, but that even his own vision of the truth is not necessarily the final way of truth but is merely the way which is true for him. The jump from the attitude

of mind that persecutes those who do not believe according to one established rule to such absolute toleration of all forms because of their symbolizing an eternal truth gives the measure of growth in religious thought from the days of Wesley to Browning. The Wesleys and their fellow-helpers were stoned and mobbed, and some died of their wounds in the latter part of the eighteenth century, while in 1850, when "Christmas-Eve" was written, an Englishman could express a height of toleration and sympathy for religions not his own, as well as taking a religious stand for himself so exalted that it is difficult to imagine a further step in these directions. Perhaps we are suffering to-day from over-toleration, that is, we tolerate not only those whose aspiration takes a different form, but those whose ideals lead to degeneracy. It seems as though all virtues must finally develop their shadows. What, however, is a shadow but the darkness occasioned by the approach of some greater light.

XXII

How else was I found there, bolt upright
  On my bench, as if I had never left it?
— Never flung out on the common at night,
  Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,

Or the laboratory of the Professor!
For the Vision, that was true, I wist,
True as that heaven and earth exist.
There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;
Yet my nearest neighbor's cheek showed gall.
She had slid away a contemptuous space:
And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,
Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I had nodded, betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have happened?
Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;
And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?
Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?
Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
Second, his gesture is too emphatic:
Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
The subject-matter itself lacks logic:
Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,
Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
Of making square to a finite eye
The circle of infinity,
And find so all-but-just-succeeding!
Great news! the sermon proves no reading
Where bee-like in the flowers I bury me,
Like Taylor's the immortal Jeremy!
And now that I know the very worst of him,

What was it I thought to obtain at first of him?
Ha! Is God mocked, as he asks?
Shall I take on me to change his tasks,
And dare, despatched to a river-head
  For a simple draught of the element,
Neglect the thing for which he sent,
  And return with another thing instead? —
Saying, "Because the water found
Welling up from underground,
Is mingled with the taints of earth,
While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
The world with the leap of a river-pulse, —
Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,
  And bring thee a chalice I found, instead:
See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!
  One would suppose that the marble bled.
What matters the water? A hope I have nursed:
The waterless cup will quench my thirst."
— Better have knelt at the poorest stream
That trickles in pain from the straitest rift!
For the less or the more is all God's gift,
  Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
And here, is there water or not, to drink?
  I then, in ignorance and weakness,
Taking God's help, have attained to think
  My heart does best to receive in meekness
That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene
With the thinnest human veil between,
Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,
  The many motions of his spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.

For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer;
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure?
Heaven soon sets right all other matters! —
Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort — can I doubt? —
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
May it be mine! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
Turned sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
Of posturings and petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery!
Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Göttingen presently, when, in the dusk
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,
Prophesied of by that horrible husk —
When thicker and thicker the darkness fills
The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial
Than a fable, myth or personification, —
May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation!
Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neighbors round,
With none of my own made — I choose here!
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me;
I have done: and if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity

The topics I dwell on, were unlawful, —
Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the holy and the awful, —
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
May truth shine out, stand ever before us!
I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,
The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,
To conclude with the doxology.

In "Easter-Day" the interest is purely personal. It is a long and somewhat intricate discussion between two friends upon the basis of belief and gives no glimpses of the historical progress of belief. In brief, the poem discusses the relation of the finite life to the infinite life. The first speaker is not satisfied with the different points of view suggested by the second speaker. First, that one would be willing to suffer martyrdom in this life if only one could truly believe it would bring eternal joy. Or perhaps doubt is God's way of telling who are his friends, who are his foes. Or perhaps God is revealed in the law of the universe, or in the shows of nature, or

in the emotions of the human heart. The first speaker takes the ground that the only possibility satisfying modern demands is an assurance that this world's gain is in its imperfectness surety for true gain in another world. An imaginatively pictured experience of his own soul is next presented, wherein he represents himself at the Judgment Day as choosing the finite life instead of the infinite life. As a result, he learns there is nothing in finite life except as related to infinite life. The way opened out toward the infinite through love is that which gives the light of life to all the good things of earth which he desired — all beauties, that of nature and art, and the joy of intellectual activity.

EASTER-DAY

. . . . . .

XV

And as I said
This nonsense, throwing back my head
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
Of ripples infinite and black,
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,

A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) "There —
Burn it!" And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
As fanned to measure equable, —
Just so great conflagrations kill
Night overhead, and rise and sink,
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network — then, each cleft
The fire had been sucked back into,
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly. On every side
Caught past escape, the earth was lit;
As if a dragon's nostril split
And all his famished ire o'erflowed;
Then, as he winced at his lord's goad,
Back he inhaled: whereat I found
The clouds into vast pillars bound,
Based on the corners of the earth,
Propping the skies at top: a dearth
Of fire i' the violet intervals,
Leaving exposed the utmost walls

Of time, about to tumble in
And end the world.

XVI

I felt begin
The Judgment-Day: to retrocede
Was too late now. "In very deed,"
(I uttered to myself) "that Day!"
The intuition burned away
All darkness from my spirit too:
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
Choosing the world. The choice was made;
And naked and disguiseless stayed,
And unevadable, the fact.
My brain held all the same compact
Its senses, nor my heart declined
Its office; rather, both combined
To help me in this juncture. I
Lost not a second, — agony
Gave boldness: since my life had end
And my choice with it — best defend,
Applaud both! I resolved to say,
"So was I framed by thee, such way
I put to use thy senses here!
It was so beautiful, so near,
Thy world, — what could I then but choose
My part there? Nor did I refuse
To look above the transient boon
Of time; but it was hard so soon
As in a short life, to give up
Such beauty: I could put the cup
Undrained of half its fulness, by;
But, to renounce it utterly,
— That was too hard! Nor did the cry

Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
Authentically deep and plain
Enough to make my lips let go.
But Thou, who knowest all, dost know
Whether I was not, life's brief while,
Endeavoring to reconcile
Those lips (too tardily, alas!)
To letting the dear remnant pass,
One day, — some drops of earthly good
Untasted! Is it for this mood,
That Thou, whose earth delights so well,
Hast made its complement a hell?"

XVII

A final belch of fire like blood,
Overbroke all heaven in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a voice
Beside me spoke thus, "Life is done,
Time ends, Eternity's begun,
And thou art judged for evermore."

XVIII

I looked up; all seemed as before;
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead
No trace was left: I saw instead
The common round me, and the sky
Above, stretched drear and emptily
Of life. 'Twas the last watch of night,
Except what brings the morning quite;
When the armed angel, conscience-clear,
His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear

And gazes on the earth he guards,
Safe one night more through all its wards,
Till God relieve him at his post.
"A dream — a waking dream at most!"
(I spoke out quick, that I might shake
The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)
"The world gone, yet the world is here?
Are not all things as they appear?
Is Judgment past for me alone?
— And where had place the great white throne?
The rising of the quick and dead?
Where stood they, small and great? Who read
The sentence from the opened book?"
So, by degrees, the blood forsook
My heart, and let it beat afresh;
I knew I should break through the mesh
Of horror, and breathe presently:
When, lo, again, the voice by me!

XIX

I saw . . . Oh brother, 'mid far sands
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-blue,
Leans o'er it, while the years pursue
Their course, unable to abate
Its paradisal laugh at fate!
One morn, — the Arab staggers blind
O'er a new tract of death, calcined
To ashes, silence, nothingness, —
And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt skies
And prostrate earth, he should surprise
The imaged vapor, head to foot,
Surveying, motionless and mute,

Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt
It vanished up again? — So hapt
My chance. He stood there. Like the smoke
Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke, —
I saw Him. One magnific pall
Mantled in massive fold and fall
His head, and coiled in snaky swathes
About His feet: night's black, that bathes
All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within —
That wrapped right hand which based the chin,
That intense meditation fixed
On His procedure, — pity mixed
With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus, He spoke to me,
Who fell before His feet, a mass,
No man now.

XX

"All is come to pass.
Such shows are over for each soul
They had respect to. In the roll
Of judgment which convinced mankind
Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
Terror must burn the truth into:
Their fate for them! — thou hadst to do
With absolute omnipotence,
Able its judgments to dispense
To the whole race, as every one
Were its sole object. Judgment done,
God is, thou art, — the rest is hurled
To nothingness for thee. This world,
This finite life, thou hast preferred,
In disbelief of God's plain word,

To heaven and to infinity.
Here the probation was for thee,
To show thy soul the earthly mixed
With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
The earthly joys lay palpable, —
A taint, in each, distinct as well;
The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
Above them, but as truly were
Taintless, so, in their nature, best.
Thy choice was earth: thou didst attest
'Twas fitter spirit should subserve
The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
No claim to their inheritance
Who chose the spirit's fugitive
Brief gleams, and yearned, 'This were to live
Indeed, if rays, completely pure
From flesh that dulls them, could endure, —
Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
Our earth, to show how cold and swart
It lies beneath their fire, but stand
As stars do, destined to expand,
Prove veritable worlds, our home!'
Thou saidst, — 'Let spirit star the dome
Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
No nook of earth, — I shall not seek
Its service further!' Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
Thy sense upon the world: 'tis thine
For ever — take it!"

XXI

"How? Is mine,
The world?" (I cried, while my soul broke

Out in a transport.) "Hast Thou spoke
Plainly in that? Earth's exquisite
Treasures of wonder and delight,
For me?"

XXII

The austere voice returned, —
"So soon made happy? Hadst thou learned
What God accounteth happiness,
Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
What hell may be his punishment
For those who doubt if God invent
Better than they. Let such men rest
Content with what they judged the best.
Let the unjust usurp at will:
The filthy shall be filthy still:
Miser, there waits the gold for thee!
Hater, indulge thine enmity!
And thou, whose heaven self-ordained
Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,
Do it! Take all the ancient show!
The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
And men apparently pursue
Their works, as they were wont to do,
While living in probation yet.
I promise not thou shalt forget
The past, now gone to its account;
But leave thee with the old amount
Of faculties, nor less nor more,
Unvisited, as heretofore,
By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
So, once more, take thy world! Expend
Eternity upon its shows,
Flung thee as freely as one rose
Out of a summer's opulence,

Over the Eden-barrier whence
Thou art excluded. Knock in vain!"

XXIII

I sat up. All was still again.
I breathed free: to my heart, back fled
The warmth. "But, all the world!" — I said.
I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
And recollected I might learn
From books, how many myriad sorts
Of fern exist, to trust reports,
Each as distinct and beautiful
As this, the very first I cull.
Think, from the first leaf to the last!
Conceive, then, earth's resources! Vast
Exhaustless beauty, endless change
Of wonder! And this foot shall range
Alps, Andes, — and this eye devour
The bee-bird and the aloe-flower?

XXIV

Then the voice, "Welcome so to rate
The arras-folds that variegate
The earth, God's antechamber, well!
The wise, who waited there, could tell
By these, what royalties in store
Lay one step past the entrance-door.
For whom, was reckoned, not so much,
This life's munificence? For such
As thou, — a race, whereof scarce one
Was able, in a million,
To feel that any marvel lay
In objects round his feet all day;
Scarce one, in many millions more,

Willing, if able, to explore
The secreter, minuter charm!
— Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
Of power to cope with God's intent, —
Or scared if the south firmament
With north-fire did its wings refledge!
All partial beauty was a pledge
Of beauty in its plenitude:
But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
Retain it! plenitude be theirs
Who looked above!"

XXV

Though sharp despairs
Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
"What matter though my trust were gone
From natural things? Henceforth my part
Be less with nature than with art!
For art supplants, gives mainly worth
To nature; 'tis man stamps the earth —
And I will seek his impress, seek
The statuary of the Greek,
Italy's painting — there my choice
Shall fix!"

XXVI

"Obtain it!" said the voice,
"— The one form with its single act,
Which sculptors labored to abstract,
The one face, painters tried to draw,
With its one look, from throngs they saw.
And that perfection in their soul,
These only hinted at? The whole,
They were but parts of? What each laid
His claim to glory on? — afraid

His fellow-men should give him rank
By mere tentatives which he shrank
Smitten at heart from, all the more,
That gazers pressed in to adore!
'Shall I be judged by only these?'
If such his soul's capacities,
Even while he trod the earth, — think, now,
What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,
With its new palace-brain where dwells
Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
That crumbled with the transient clay!
What visions will his right hand's sway
Still turn to forms, as still they burst
Upon him? How will he quench thirst,
Titanically infantine,
Laid at the breast of the Divine?
Does it confound thee, — this first page
Emblazoning man's heritage? —
Can this alone absorb thy sight,
As pages were not infinite, —
Like the omnipotence which tasks
Itself to furnish all that asks
The soul it means to satiate?
What was the world, the starry state
Of the broad skies, — what, all displays
Of power and beauty intermixed,
Which now thy soul is chained betwixt, —
What else than needful furniture
For life's first stage? God's work, be sure,
No more spreads wasted, than falls scant!
He filled, did not exceed, man's want
Of beauty in this life. But through
Life pierce, — and what has earth to do,
Its utmost beauty's appanage,

With the requirement of next stage?
Did God pronounce earth 'very good'?
Needs must it be, while understood
For man's preparatory state;
Nought here to heighten nor abate;
Transfer the same completeness here,
To serve a new state's use, — and drear
Deficiency gapes every side!
The good, tried once, were bad, retried.
See the enwrapping rocky niche,
Sufficient for the sleep in which
The lizard breathes for ages safe:
Split the mould — and as light would chafe
The creature's new world-widened sense,
Dazzled to death at evidence
Of all the sounds and sights that broke
Innumerous at the chisel's stroke, —
So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff
Was, neither more nor less, enough
To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
Man reckoned it immeasurable?
So thinks the lizard of his vault!
Could God be taken in default,
Short of contrivances, by you, —
Or reached, ere ready to pursue
His progress through eternity?
That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
To nothingness for ever; so,
Has God abolished at a blow
This world, wherein his saints were pent, —
Who, though found grateful and content,
With the provision there, as thou,
Yet knew he would not disallow

Their spirit's hunger, felt as well, —
Unsated, — not unsatable,
As paradise gives proof. Deride
Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside!"

XXVII

I cried in anguish, "Mind, the mind,
So miserably cast behind,
To gain what had been wisely lost!
Oh, let me strive to make the most
Of the poor stinted soul, I nipped
Of budding wings, else now equipped
For voyage from summer isle to isle!
And though she needs must reconcile
Ambition to the life on ground,
Still, I can profit by late found
But precious knowledge. Mind is best —
I will seize mind, forego the rest,
And try how far my tethered strength
May crawl in this poor breadth and length.
Let me, since I can fly no more,
At least spin dervish-like about
(Till giddy rapture almost doubt
I fly) through circling sciences,
Philosophies and histories
Should the whirl slacken there, then verse,
Fining to music, shall asperse
Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
Intoxicate, half-break my chain!
Not joyless, though more favored feet
Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
The floor. At least earth's bond is broke!"

XXVIII

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
"Let me alone! No answer, pray,
To this! I know what Thou wilt say!
All still is earth's, — to know, as much
As feel its truths, which if we touch
With sense, or apprehend in soul,
What matter? I have reached the goal —
'Whereto does knowledge serve!' will burn
My eyes, too sure, at every turn!
I cannot look back now, nor stake
Bliss on the race, for running's sake.
The goal's a ruin like the rest! —
And so much worse thy latter quest,"
(Added the voice) "that even on earth —
Whenever, in man's soul, had birth
Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
Which pull the more into the less,
Making the finite comprehend
Infinity, — the bard would spend
Such praise alone, upon his craft,
As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
Goes to the craftsman who arranged
The seven strings, changed them and rechanged —
Knowing it was the South that harped.
He felt his song, in singing, warped;
Distinguished his and God's part: whence
A world of spirit as of sense
Was plain to him, yet not too plain,
Which he could traverse, not remain
A guest in: — else were permanent
Heaven on the earth its gleams were meant
To sting with hunger for full light, —

Made visible in verse, despite
The veiling weakness, — truth by means
Of fable, showing while it screens, —
Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,
Was ever fable on outside.
Such gleams made bright the earth an age;
Now the whole sun's his heritage!
Take up thy world, it is allowed,
Thou who hast entered in the cloud!"

XXIX

Then I — "Behold, my spirit bleeds,
Catches no more at broken reeds, —
But lilies flower those reeds above:
I let the world go, and take love!
Love survives in me, albeit those
I love be henceforth masks and shows,
Not living men and women: still
I mind how love repaired all ill,
Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends
With parents, brothers, children, friends!
Some semblance of a woman yet
With eyes to help me to forget,
Shall look on me; and I will match
Departed love with love, attach
Old memories to new dreams, nor scorn
The poorest of the grains of corn
I save from shipwreck on this isle,
Trusting its barrenness may smile
With happy foodful green one day,
More precious for the pains. I pray, —
Leave to love, only!"

XXX

At the word,
The form, I looked to have been stirred
With pity and approval, rose
O'er me, as when the headsman throws
Axe over shoulder to make end —
I fell prone, letting Him expend
His wrath, while thus the inflicting voice
Smote me. "Is this thy final choice?
Love is the best? 'Tis somewhat late!
And all thou dost enumerate
Of power and beauty in the world,
The mightiness of love was curled
Inextricably round about.
Love lay within it and without,
To clasp thee, — but in vain! Thy soul
Still shrunk from Him who made the whole,
Still set deliberate aside
His love! — Now take love! Well betide
Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take
The show of love for the name's sake,
Remembering every moment Who,
Beside creating thee unto
These ends, and these for thee, was said
To undergo death in thy stead
In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.
What doubt in thee could countervail
Belief in it? Upon the ground
'That in the story had been found
Too much love! How could God love so?'
He who in all his works below
Adapted to the needs of man,
Made love the basis of the plan, —

Did love, as was demonstrated:
While man, who was so fit instead
To hate, as every day gave proof, —
Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,
Both could and did invent that scheme
Of perfect love: 'twould well beseem
Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,
Not tally with God's usual ways!"

XXXI

And I cowered deprecatingly —
"Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
Or grant what shall seem heaven almost!
Let me not know that all is lost,
Though lost it be — leave me not tied
To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
Let that old life seem mine — no more —
With limitation as before,
With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
Be all the earth a wilderness!
Only let me go on, go on,
Still hoping ever and anon
To reach one eve the Better Land!"

XXXII

Then did the form expand, expand —
I knew Him through the dread disguise
As the whole God within His eyes
Embraced me.

XXXIII

When I lived again,
The day was breaking, — the grey plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a vision? False or true?

Since then, three varied years are spent,
And commonly my mind is bent
To think it was a dream — be sure
A mere dream and distemperature —
The last day's watching: then the night, —
The shock of that strange Northern Light
Set my head swimming, bred in me
A dream. And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, who may yet escape,
She knows, — the fiend in angel's shape!
Thank God, no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said!
Still every now and then my head
Raised glad, sinks mournful — all grows drear
Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
And think, "How dreadful to be grudged
No ease henceforth, as one that's judged.
Condemned to earth for ever, shut
From heaven!"
But Easter-Day breaks! But
Christ rises! Mercy every way
Is infinite, — and who can say?

This poem has often been cited as a proof of Browning's own belief in historical Chris-

tianity. It can hardly be said to be more than a doubtful proof, for it depends upon a subjective vision of which the speaker, himself, doubts the truth. The speaker in this poem belongs in the same category with Bishop Blougram. A belief in infinite Love can come to him only through the dogma of the incarnation, he therefore holds to that, no matter how tossed about by doubts. The failure of all human effort to attain the Absolute and, as a consequence, the belief in an Absolute beyond this life is a dominant note in Browning's own philosophy. The nature of that Absolute he further evolves from the intellectual observation of power that transcends human comprehension, and the even more deep-rooted sense of love in the human heart.

Much of his thought resembles that of the English scientist, Herbert Spencer. The relativity of knowledge and the relativity of good and evil are cardinal doctrines with both of them. Herbert Spencer's mystery behind all phenomena and Browning's failure of human knowledge are identical — the negative proof of the absolute, — but where Spencer contents himself with the statement that though we cannot know the Absolute, yet it must transcend all that the human mind has con-

ceived of perfection, Browning, as we have already seen, declares that we *can* know something of the nature of that Absolute through the love which we know in the human heart as well as the power we see displayed in Nature.

In connection with this subject, which for lack of space can merely be touched on in the present volume, it will be instructive to round out Browning's presentations of his own contributions to nineteenth-century thought with two quotations, one from "The Parleyings:" "With Bernard de Mandeville," and one from a poem in his last volume "Reverie." In the first, human love is symbolized as the image made by a lens of the sun, which latter symbolizes Divine Love.

BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

. . . . . .

IX

Boundingly up through Night's wall dense and dark,
Embattled crags and clouds, outbroke the Sun
Above the conscious earth, and one by one
Her heights and depths absorbed to the last spark
His fluid glory, from the far fine ridge
Of mountain-granite which, transformed to gold,
Laughed first the thanks back, to the vale's dusk fold
On fold of vapor-swathing, like a bridge

Shattered beneath some giant's stamp. Night wist
Her work done and betook herself in mist
To marsh and hollow there to bide her time
Blindly in acquiescence. Everywhere
Did earth acknowledge Sun's embrace sublime
Thrilling her to the heart of things: since there
No ore ran liquid, no spar branched anew,
No arrowy crystal gleamed, but straightway grew
Glad through the inrush — glad nor more nor less
Than, 'neath his gaze, forest and wilderness,
Hill, dale, land, sea, the whole vast stretch and spread,
The universal world of creatures bred
By Sun's munificence, alike gave praise —
All creatures but one only: gaze for gaze,
Joyless and thankless, who — all scowling can —
Protests against the innumerous praises? Man,
Sullen and silent.

Stand thou forth then, state
Thy wrong, thou sole aggrieved — disconsolate —
While every beast, bird, reptile, insect, gay
And glad acknowledges the bounteous day!

x

Man speaks now: — "What avails Sun's earth-felt thrill
To me? Sun penetrates the ore, the plant —
They feel and grow: perchance with subtler skill
He interfuses fly, worm, brute, until
Each favored object pays life's ministrant
By pressing, in obedience to his will,
Up to completion of the task prescribed,
So stands and stays a type. Myself imbibed
Such influence also, stood and stand complete —
The perfect Man, — head, body, hands and feet,

True to the pattern: but does that suffice?
How of my superadded mind which needs
— Not to be, simply, but to do, and pleads
For — more than knowledge that by some device
Sun quickens matter: mind is nobly fain
To realize the marvel, make — for sense
As mind — the unseen visible, condense
— Myself — Sun's all-pervading influence
So as to serve the needs of mind, explain
What now perplexes. Let the oak increase
His corrugated strength on strength, the palm
Lift joint by joint her fan-fruit, ball and balm, —
Let the coiled serpent bask in bloated peace, —
The eagle, like some skyey derelict,
Drift in the blue, suspended glorying, —
The lion lord it by the desert-spring, —
What know or care they of the power which pricked
Nothingness to perfection? I, instead,
When all-developed still am found a thing
All-incomplete: for what though flesh had force
Transcending theirs — hands able to unring
The tightened snake's coil, eyes that could outcourse
The eagle's soaring, voice whereat the king
Of carnage couched discrowned? Mind seeks to see,
Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,
The outside mind — whose quickening I attain
To recognize — I only. All in vain
Would mind address itself to render plain
The nature of the essence. Drag what lurks
Behind the operation — that which works
Latently everywhere by outward proof —
Drag that mind forth to face mine? No! aloof
I solely crave that one of all the beams
Which do Sun's work in darkness, at my will

Should operate — myself for once have skill
To realize the energy which streams
Flooding the universe. Above, around,
Beneath — why mocks that mind my own thus found
Simply of service, when the world grows dark,
To half-surmise — were Sun's use understood,
I might demonstrate him supplying food,
Warmth, life, no less the while? To grant one spark
Myself may deal with — make it thaw my blood
And prompt my steps, were truer to the mark
Of mind's requirement than a half-surmise
That somehow secretly is operant
A power all matter feels, mind only tries
To comprehend! Once more — no idle vaunt
'Man comprehends the Sun's self!' Mysteries
At source why probe into? Enough: display,
Make demonstrable, how, by night as day,
Earth's centre and sky's outspan, all's informed
Equally by Sun's efflux! — source from whence
If just one spark I drew, full evidence
Were mine of fire ineffably enthroned —
Sun's self made palpable to Man!"

XI

Thus moaned
Man till Prometheus helped him, — as we learn, —
Offered an artifice whereby he drew
Sun's rays into a focus, — plain and true,
The very Sun in little: made fire burn
And henceforth do Man service — glass-conglobed
Though to a pin-point circle — all the same
Comprising the Sun's self, but Sun disrobed
Of that else-unconceived essential flame
Borne by no naked sight. Shall mind's eye strive

Achingly to companion as it may
The supersubtle effluence, and contrive
To follow beam and beam upon their way
Hand-breadth by hand-breadth, till sense faint — confessed
Frustrate, eluded by unknown unguessed
Infinitude of action? Idle quest!
Rather ask aid from optics. Sense, descry
The spectrum — mind, infer immensity!
Little? In little, light, warmth, life are blessed —
Which, in the large, who sees to bless? Not I
More than yourself: so, good my friend, keep still
Trustful with — me? with thee, sage Mandeville!

The second "Reverie" has the effect of a triumphant swan song, especially the closing stanzas, the poem having been written very near the end of the poet's life.

"In a beginning God
  Made heaven and earth." Forth flashed
Knowledge: from star to clod
  Man knew things: doubt abashed
Closed its long period.

Knowledge obtained Power praise.
  Had Good been manifest,
Broke out in cloudless blaze,
  Unchequered as unrepressed,
In all things Good at best —

Then praise — all praise, no blame —
  Had hailed the perfection. No!
As Power's display, the same
  Be Good's — praise forth shall flow
Unisonous in acclaim!

Even as the world its life,
  So have I lived my own —
Power seen with Love at strife,
  That sure, this dimly shown,
— Good rare and evil rife.

Whereof the effect be — faith
  That, some far day, were found
Ripeness in things now rathe,
  Wrong righted, each chain unbound,
Renewal born out of scathe.

Why faith — but to lift the load,
  To leaven the lump, where lies
Mind prostrate through knowledge owed
  To the loveless Power it tries
To withstand, how vain! In flowed

Ever resistless fact:
  No more than the passive clay
Disputes the potter's act,
  Could the whelmed mind disobey
Knowledge the cataract.

But, perfect in every part,
  Has the potter's moulded shape,
Leap of man's quickened heart,
  Throe of his thought's escape,
Stings of his soul which dart

Through the barrier of flesh, till keen
  She climbs from the calm and clear,
Through turbidity all between,
  From the known to the unknown here,
Heaven's "Shall be," from Earth's "Has been"?

Then life is — to wake not sleep,
  Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where blindly creep
  Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

Where, amid what strifes and storms
  May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love — transports, transforms
  Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.

I have faith such end shall be:
  From the first, Power was — I knew.
Life has made clear to me
  That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

When see? When there dawns a day,
  If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
  Where the strange and new have birth,
And Power comes full in play.

CHAPTER VI

ART CRITICISM INSPIRED BY THE ENGLISH MUSICIAN, AVISON

IN the "Parleying" "With Charles Avison," Browning plunges into a discussion of the problem of the ephemeralness of musical expression. He hits upon Avison to have his colloquy with because a march by this musician came into his head, and the march came into his head for no better reason than that it was the month of March. Some interest would attach to Avison if it were only for the reason that he was organist of the Church of St. Nicholas in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In the earliest accounts St. Nicholas was styled simply, "The Church of Newcastle-upon-Tyne," but in 1785 it became a Cathedral. This was after Avison's death in 1770. All we know about the organ upon which Avison performed is found in a curious old history of Newcastle by Brand. "I have found," he writes, "no account of any organ in this church during the times of popery though it is very probable there has been one. "About the year 1676,

the corporation of Newcastle contributed £300 towards the erection of the present organ. They added a trumpet stop to it June 22d, 1699."

The year that Avison was born, 1710, it is recorded further that "the back front of this organ was finished which cost the said corporation £200 together with the expense of cleaning and repairing the whole instrument."

June 26, 1749, the common council of Newcastle ordered a sweet stop to be added to the organ. This was after Avison became organist, his appointment to that post having been in 1736. So we know that he at least had a "trumpet stop" and a "sweet stop," with which to embellish his organ playing.

The church is especially distinguished for the number and beauty of its chantries, and any who have a taste for examining armorial bearings will find two good-sized volumes devoted to a description of those in this church, by Richardson. Equal distinction attaches to the church owing to the beauty of its steeple, which has been called the pride and glory of the Northern Hemisphere. According to the enthusiastic Richardson it is justly esteemed on account of its peculiar excellency of design and delicacy of execution one of the finest specimens of architectural beauty in Europe.

This steeple is as conspicuous a feature of Newcastle as the State House Dome is of Boston, situated, as it is, almost in the center of the town. Richardson gives the following minute description of this marvel. "It consists of a square tower forty feet in width, having great and small turrets with pinnacles at the angles and center of each front tower. From the four turrets at the angles spring two arches, which meet in an intersecting direction, and bear on their center an efficient perforated lanthorne, surmounted by a tall and beautiful spire: the angles of the lanthorne have pinnacles similar to those on the turrets, and the whole of the pinnacles, being twelve in number, and the spire, are ornamented with crockets and vanes."

There is a stirring tradition in regard to this structure related by Bourne to the effect that in the time of the Civil Wars, when the Scots had besieged the town for several weeks, and were still as far as at first from taking it, the general sent a messenger to the mayor of the town, and demanded the keys, and the delivering up of the town, or he would immediately demolish the steeple of St. Nicholas. The mayor and aldermen upon hearing this, immediately ordered a certain number of the chiefest of the Scottish prisoners to be carried

up to the top of the tower, the place below the lanthorne and there confined. After this, they returned the general an answer to this purpose, — that they would upon no terms deliver up the town, but would to the last moment defend it: that the steeple of St. Nicholas was indeed a beautiful and magnificent piece of architecture, and one of the great ornaments of the town; but yet should be blown into atoms before ransomed at such a rate: that, however, if it was to fall, it should not fall alone, that the same moment he destroyed the beautiful structure he should bathe his hands in the blood of his countrymen who were placed there on purpose either to preserve it from ruin or to die along with it. This message had the desired effect. The men were there kept prisoners during the whole time of the siege and not so much as one gun fired against it.

Avison, however, had other claims to distinction, besides being organist of this ancient church. He was a composer, and was remembered by one of his airs, at least, into the nineteenth century, namely "Sound the Loud Timbrel." He appears not to be remembered, however, by his concertos, of which he published no less than five sets for a full band of stringed instruments, nor by his

quartets and trios, and two sets of sonatas for the harpsichord and two violins. All we have to depend on now as to the quality of his music are the strictures of a certain Dr. Hayes, an Oxford Professor, who points out many errors against the rules of composition in the works of Avison, whence he infers that his skill in music is not very profound, and the somewhat more appreciative remarks of Hawkins who says "The music of Avison is light and elegant, but it wants originality, a necessary consequence of his too close attachment to the style of Geminiani which in a few particulars only he was able to imitate."

Geminiani was a celebrated violin player and composer of the day, who had come to England from Italy. He is said to have held his pupil, Avison, in high esteem and to have paid him a visit at Newcastle in 1760. Avison's early education was gained in Italy; and in addition to his musical attainments he was a scholar and a man of some literary acquirements. It is not surprising, considering all these educational advantages that he really made something of a stir upon the publication of his "small book," as Browning calls it, with, we may add, its "large title."

AN

ESSAY

ON

MUSICAL EXPRESSION

BY CHARLES AVISON

Organist in NEWCASTLE

With ALTERATIONS and Large ADDITIONS

To which is added,

A LETTER to the AUTHOR

concerning the Music of the ANCIENTS

and some Passages in CLASSIC WRITERS

relating to the Subject.

LIKEWISE

Mr. AVISON'S REPLY to the Author of

Remarks on the Essay on MUSICAL EXPRESSION

In a Letter from Mr. *Avison* to his Friend in *London*

THE THIRD EDITION

LONDON

Printed for LOCKYER DAVIS, in *Holborn.*

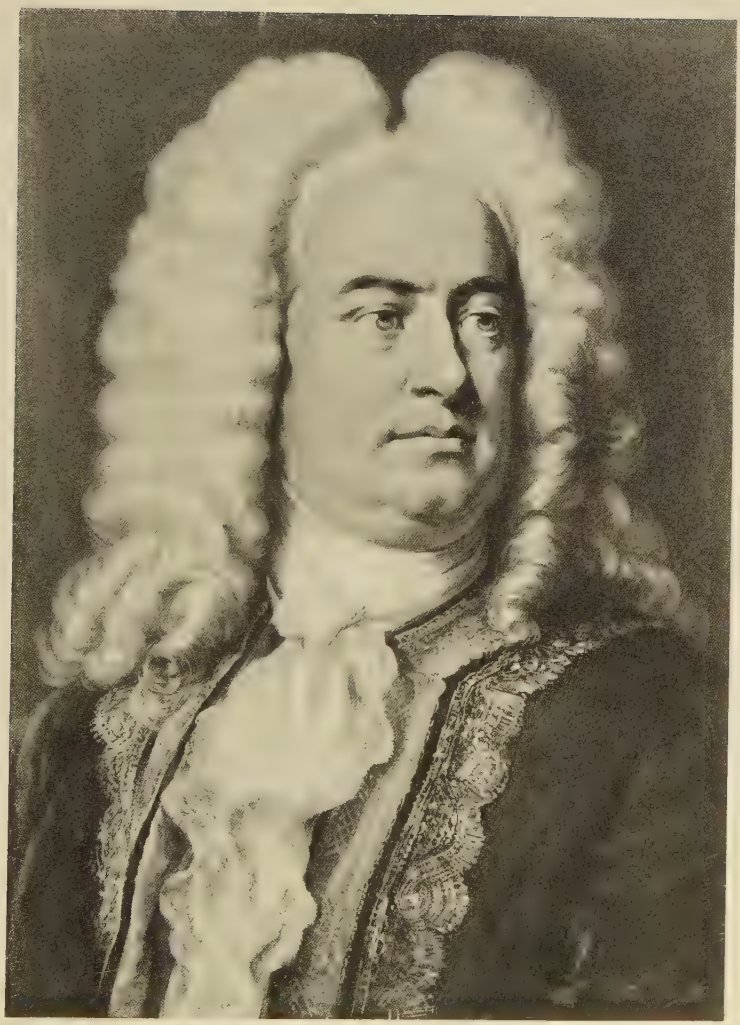
Printer to the ROYAL SOCIETY.

MDCCLXXV.

The author of the "Remarks on the Essay on Musical Expression" was the aforementioned Dr. W. Hayes, and although the learned doctor's pamphlet seems to have died a natural death, some idea of its strictures may be gained from Avison's reply. The criticisms are rather too technical to be

of interest to the general reader, but one is given here to show how gentlemanly a temper Mr. Avison possessed when he was under fire. His reply runs "His first critique, and, I think, his masterpiece, contains many circumstantial, but false and virulent remarks on the first allegro of these concertos, to which he supposes I would give the name of *fugue*. Be it just what he pleases to call it I shall not defend what the public is already in possession of, the public being the most proper judge. I shall only here observe, that our critic has wilfully, or ignorantly, confounded the terms *fugue* and *imitation*, which latter is by no means subject to the same laws with the former.

"Had I observed the method of answering the *accidental subjects* in this *allegro*, as laid down by our critic in his remarks, they must have produced most shocking effects; which, though this mechanic in music, would, perhaps, have approved, yet better judges might, in reality, have imagined I had known no other art than that of the spruzzarino." There is a nice independence about this that would indicate Mr. Avison to be at least an aspirant in the right direction in musical composition. His criticism of Handel, too, at a time when the world was divided between enthusiasm for



HANDEL

Handel and enthusiasm for Buononcini, shows a remarkably just and penetrating estimate of this great genius.

"Mr. Handel is, in music, what his own Dryden was in poetry; nervous, exalted, and harmonious; but voluminous, and, consequently, not always correct. Their abilities equal to every thing; their execution frequently inferior. Born with genius capable of *soaring the boldest flights;* they have sometimes, to suit the vitiated taste of the age they lived in, *descended to the lowest.* Yet, as both their excellencies are infinitely more numerous than their deficiencies, so both their characters will devolve to latest posterity, not as models of perfection, yet glorious examples of those amazing powers that actuate the human soul."

On the whole, Mr. Avison's "little book" on Musical Expression is eminently sensible as to the matter and very agreeable in style. He hits off well, for example, the difference between "musical expression" and imitation.

"As dissonances and shocking sounds cannot be called Musical Expression, so neither do I think, can mere imitation of several other things be entitled to this name, which, however, among the generality of mankind hath often obtained it. Thus, the gradual rising

or falling of the notes in a long succession is often used to denote ascent or descent; broken intervals, to denote an interrupted motion; a number of quick divisions, to describe swiftness or flying; sounds resembling laughter, to describe laughter; with a number of other contrivances of a parallel kind, which it is needless here to mention. Now all these I should chuse to style imitation, rather than expression; because it seems to me, that their tendency is rather to fix the hearer's attention on the similitude between the sounds and the things which they describe, and thereby to excite a reflex act of the understanding, than to affect the heart and raise the passions of the soul.

"This distinction seems more worthy our notice at present, because some very eminent composers have attached themselves chiefly to the method here mentioned; and seem to think they have exhausted all the depths of expression, by a dextrous imitation of the meaning of a few particular words, that occur in the hymns or songs which they set to music. Thus, were one of these gentlemen to express the following words of *Milton*,

> — Their songs
> Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heav'n:

it is highly probable, that upon the word *divide*, he would run a *division* of half a dozen bars; and on the subsequent part of the sentence, he would not think he had done the poet justice, or *risen* to that *height* of sublimity which he ought to express, till he had climbed up to the very top of his instrument, or at least as far as the human voice could follow him. And this would pass with a great part of mankind for musical expression; instead of that noble mixture of solemn airs and various harmony, which indeed elevates our thoughts, and gives that exquisite pleasure, which none but true lovers of harmony can feel." What Avison calls "musical expression," we call to-day "content." And thus Avison "tenders evidence that music in his day as much absorbed heart and soul then as Wagner's music now." It is not unlikely that this very passage may have started Browning off on his argumentative way concerning the question: how lasting and how fundamental are the powers of musical expression.

The poet's memory goes back a hundred years only to reach "The bands-man Avison whose little book and large tune had led him the long way from to-day"

CHARLES AVISON

. . . . . .

And to-day's music-manufacture, — Brahms,
Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt, — to where — trumpets, shawms,
Show yourselves joyful! — Handel reigns — supreme?
By no means! Buononcini's work is theme
For fit laudation of the impartial few:
(We stand in England, mind you!) Fashion too
Favors Geminiani — of those choice
Concertos: nor there wants a certain voice
Raised in thy favor likewise, famed Pepusch
Dear to our great-grandfathers! In a bush
Of Doctor's wig, they prized thee timing beats
While Greenway trilled "Alexis." Such were feats
Of music in thy day — dispute who list —
Avison, of Newcastle organist!

V

And here's your music all alive once more —
As once it was alive, at least: just so
The figured worthies of a waxwork-show
Attest — such people, years and years ago,
Looked thus when outside death had life below,
— Could say "We are now," not "We were of yore,"
— "Feel how our pulses leap!" and not "Explore —
Explain why quietude has settled o'er
Surface once all-awork!" Ay, such a "Suite"
Roused heart to rapture, such a "Fugue" would catch
Soul heavenwards up, when time was: why attach
Blame to exhausted faultlessness, no match
For fresh achievement? Feat once — ever feat!
How can completion grow still more complete?

Hear Avison! He tenders evidence
That music in his day as much absorbed
Heart and soul then as Wagner's music now.
Perfect from center to circumference —
Orbed to the full can be but fully orbed:
And yet — and yet — whence comes it that "O Thou" —
Sighed by the soul at eve to Hesperus —
Will not again take wing and fly away
(Since fatal Wagner fixed it fast for us)
In some unmodulated minor? Nay,
Even by Handel's help!

Having stated the problem that confronts him, namely, the change of fashion in music, the poet boldly goes on to declare that there is no truer truth obtainable by man than comes of music, because it does give direct expression to the moods of the soul, yet there is a hitch that balks her of full triumph, namely the musical form in which these moods are expressed does not stay fixed. This statement is enriched by a digression upon the meaning of the soul.

VI

I state it thus:
There is no truer truth obtainable
By Man than comes of music. "Soul" — (accept
A word which vaguely names what no adept
In word-use fits and fixes so that still
Thing shall not slip word's fetter and remain
Innominate as first, yet, free again,

Is no less recognized the absolute
Fact underlying that same other fact
Concerning which no cavil can dispute
Our nomenclature when we call it "Mind" —
Something not Matter) — "Soul," who seeks shall find
Distinct beneath that something. You exact
An illustrative image? This may suit.

VII

We see a work: the worker works behind,
Invisible himself. Suppose his act
Be to o'erarch a gulf: he digs, transports,
Shapes and, through enginery — all sizes, sorts,
Lays stone by stone until a floor compact
Proves our bridged causeway. So works Mind — by stress
Of faculty, with loose facts, more or less,
Builds up our solid knowledge: all the same,
Underneath rolls what Mind may hide not tame,
An element which works beyond our guess,
Soul, the unsounded sea — whose lift of surge,
Spite of all superstructure, lets emerge,
In flower and foam, Feeling from out the deeps
Mind arrogates no mastery upon —
Distinct indisputably. Has there gone
To dig up, drag forth, render smooth from rough
Mind's flooring, — operosity enough?
Still the successive labor of each inch,
Who lists may learn: from the last turn of winch
That let the polished slab-stone find its place,
To the first prod of pick-axe at the base
Of the unquarried mountain, — what was all
Mind's varied process except natural,
Nay, easy, even, to descry, describe,
After our fashion? "So worked Mind: its tribe

Of senses ministrant above, below,
Far, near, or now or haply long ago
Brought to pass knowledge." But Soul's sea, — drawn whence,
Fed how, forced whither, — by what evidence
Of ebb and flow, that's felt beneath the tread,
Soul has its course 'neath Mind's work over-head, —
Who tells of, tracks to source the founts of Soul?
Yet wherefore heaving sway and restless roll
This side and that, except to emulate
Stability above? To match and mate
Feeling with knowledge, — make as manifest
Soul's work as Mind's work, turbulence as rest,
Hates, loves, joys, woes, hopes, fears, that rise and sink
Ceaselessly, passion's transient flit and wink,
A ripple's tinting or a spume-sheet's spread
Whitening the wave, — to strike all this life dead,
Run mercury into a mould like lead,
And henceforth have the plain result to show —
How we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know —
This were the prize and is the puzzle! — which
Music essays to solve: and here's the hitch
That balks her of full triumph else to boast.

Then follows his explanation of the "hitch," which necessitates a comparison with the other arts. His contention is that art adds nothing to the *knowledge* of the mind. It simply moulds into a fixed form elements already known which before lay loose and dissociated, it therefore does not really create. But there is one realm, that of feeling, to which the arts never succeed in giving per-

manent form though all try to do it. What is it they succeed in getting? The poet does not make the point very clear, but he seems to be groping after the idea that the arts present only the *phenomena* of feeling or the image of feeling instead of the *reality*. Like all people who are appreciative of music, he realizes that music comes nearer to expressing the spiritual reality of feeling than the other arts, and yet music of all the arts is the least permanent in its appeal.

VIII

All Arts endeavor this, and she the most
Attains thereto, yet fails of touching: why?
Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's ministry?
What's known once is known ever: Arts arrange,
Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange
Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or deep
Construct their bravest, — still such pains produce
Change, not creation: simply what lay loose
At first lies firmly after, what design
Was faintly traced in hesitating line
Once on a time, grows firmly resolute
Henceforth and evermore. Now, could we shoot
Liquidity into a mould, — some way
Arrest Soul's evanescent moods, and keep
Unalterably still the forms that leap
To life for once by help of Art! — which yearns
To save its capture: Poetry discerns,
Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and fall,
Bursting, subsidence, intermixture — all

A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art a-strain
Would stay the apparition, — nor in vain:
The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and swift
Color-and-line-throw — proud the prize they lift!
Thus felt Man and thus looked Man, — passions caught
I' the midway swim of sea, — not much, if aught,
Of nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and fears,
Enwombed past Art's disclosure. Fleet the years,
And still the Poet's page holds Helena
At gaze from topmost Troy — "But where are they,
My brothers, in the armament I name
Hero by hero? Can it be that shame
For their lost sister holds them from the war?"
— Knowing not they already slept afar
Each of them in his own dear native land.
Still on the Painter's fresco, from the hand
Of God takes Eve the life-spark whereunto
She trembles up from nothingness. Outdo
Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper yet,
Drag into day, — by sound, thy master-net, —
The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing
Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
With limbs' play and life's semblance! There it lies,
Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
And marvels, most to love and laud thee for!
Save it from chance and change we most abhor!
Give momentary feeling permanence,
So that thy capture hold, a century hence,
Truth's very heart of truth as, safe to-day,
The Painter's Eve, the Poet's Helena,
Still rapturously bend, afar still throw
The wistful gaze! Thanks, Homer, Angelo!
Could Music rescue thus from Soul's profound,
Give feeling immortality by sound,

Then were she queenliest of Arts! Alas —
As well expect the rainbow not to pass!
"Praise 'Radaminta' — love attains therein
To perfect utterance! Pity — what shall win
Thy secret like 'Rinaldo'?" — so men said:
Once all was perfume — now, the flower is dead —
They spied tints, sparks have left the spar! Love, hate,
Joy, fear, survive, — alike importunate
As ever to go walk the world again,
Nor ghost-like pant for outlet all in vain
Till Music loose them, fit each filmily
With form enough to know and name it by
For any recognizer sure of ken
And sharp of ear, no grosser denizen
Of earth than needs be. Nor to such appeal
Is Music long obdurate: off they steal —
How gently, dawn-doomed phantoms! back come they
Full-blooded with new crimson of broad day —
Passion made palpable once more. Ye look
Your last on Handel? Gaze your first on Gluck!
Why wistful search, O waning ones, the chart
Of stars for you while Haydn, while Mozart
Occupies heaven? These also, fanned to fire,
Flamboyant wholly, — so perfections tire, —
Whiten to wanness, till . . . let others note
The ever-new invasion!

The poet makes no attempt to give any reason why music should be so ephemeral in its appeal. He merely refers to the development of harmony and modulation, nor does it seem to enter his head that there can be any question about the appeal being eph-

emeral. He imagines the possibility of resuscitating dead and gone music with modern harmonies and novel modulations, but gives that up as an irreverant innovation. His next mood is a historical one; dead and gone music may have something for us in a historical sense, that is, if we bring our life to kindle theirs, we may sympathetically enter into the life of the time.

IX

I devote
Rather my modicum of parts to use
What power may yet avail to re-infuse
(In fancy, please you!) sleep that looks like death
With momentary liveliness, lend breath
To make the torpor half inhale. O Relfe,
An all-unworthy pupil, from the shelf
Of thy laboratory, dares unstop
Bottle, ope box, extract thence pinch and drop
Of dusts and dews a many thou didst shrine
Each in its right receptacle, assign
To each its proper office, letter large
Label and label, then with solemn charge,
Reviewing learnedly the list complete
Of chemical reactives, from thy feet
Push down the same to me, attent below,
Power in abundance: armed wherewith I go
To play the enlivener. Bring good antique stuff!
Was it alight once? Still lives spark enough
For breath to quicken, run the smouldering ash
Red right-through. What, "stone-dead" were fools so rash

As style my Avison, because he lacked
Modern appliance, spread out phrase unracked
By modulations fit to make each hair
Stiffen upon his wig? See there — and there!
I sprinkle my reactives, pitch broadcast
Discords and resolutions, turn aghast
Melody's easy-going, jostle law
With license, modulate (no Bach in awe),
Change enharmonically (Hudl to thank),
And lo, up-start the flamelets, — what was blank
Turns scarlet, purple, crimson! Straightway scanned
By eyes that like new lustre — Love once more
Yearns through the Largo, Hatred as before
Rages in the Rubato: e'en thy March,
My Avison, which, sooth to say — (ne'er arch
Eyebrows in anger!) — timed, in Georgian years
The step precise of British Grenadiers
To such a nicety, — if score I crowd,
If rhythm I break, if beats I vary, — tap
At bar's off-starting turns true thunder-clap,
Ever the pace augmented till — what's here?
Titanic striding toward Olympus!

x

Fear
No such irreverent innovation! Still
Glide on, go rolling, water-like, at will —
Nay, were thy melody in monotone,
The due three-parts dispensed with!

xi

This alone
Comes of my tiresome talking: Music's throne
Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,

And whom in turn — by who knows what new feats
Of strength, — shall somebody as sure push down,
Consign him dispossessed of sceptre, crown,
And orb imperial — whereto? — Never dream
That what once lived shall ever die! They seem
Dead — do they? lapsed things lost in limbo? Bring
Our life to kindle theirs, and straight each king
Starts, you shall see, stands up, from head to foot
No inch that is not Purcell! Wherefore? (Suit
Measure to subject, first — no marching on
Yet in thy bold C Major, Avison,
As suited step a minute since: no: wait —
Into the minor key first modulate —
Gently with A, now — in the Lesser Third!)

The really serious conclusion of the poem amounts to a doctrine of relativity in art and not only in art but in ethics and religion. It is a statement in poetry of the prevalent thought of the nineteenth century, of which the most widely known exponent was Herbert Spencer. The form in which every truth manifests itself is partial and therefore will pass, but the underlying truth, the absolute which unfolds itself in form after form is eternal. Every manifestation in form, according to Browning, however, has also its infinite value in relation to the truth which is preserved through it.

XII

Of all the lamentable debts incurred
By Man through buying knowledge, this were worst:

That he should find his last gain prove his first
Was futile — merely nescience absolute,
Not knowledge in the bud which holds a fruit
Haply undreamed of in the soul's Spring-tide,
Pursed in the petals Summer opens wide,
And Autumn, withering, rounds to perfect ripe, —
Not this, — but ignorance, a blur to wipe
From human records, late it graced so much.
"Truth — this attainment? Ah, but such and such
Beliefs of yore seemed inexpugnable.

When we attained them! E'en as they, so will
This their successor have the due morn, noon,
Evening and night — just as an old-world tune
Wears out and drops away, until who hears
Smilingly questions — 'This it was brought tears
Once to all eyes, — this roused heart's rapture once?'
So will it be with truth that, for the nonce,
Styles itself truth perennial: 'ware its wile!
Knowledge turns nescience, — foremost on the file,
Simply proves first of our delusions."

XIII

Now —
Blare it forth, bold C Major! Lift thy brow,
Man, the immortal, that wast never fooled
With gifts no gifts at all, nor ridiculed —
Man knowing — he who nothing knew! As Hope,
Fear, Joy, and Grief, — though ampler stretch and scope
They seek and find in novel rhythm, fresh phrase, —
Were equally existent in far days
Of Music's dim beginning — even so,
Truth was at full within thee long ago,
Alive as now it takes what latest shape

May startle thee by strangeness. Truths escape
Time's insufficient garniture; they fade,
They fall — those sheathings now grown sere, whose aid
Was infinite to truth they wrapped, saved fine
And free through March frost: May dews crystalline
Nourish truth merely, — does June boast the fruit
As — not new vesture merely but, to boot,
Novel creation? Soon shall fade and fall
Myth after myth — the husk-like lies I call
New truth's corolla-safeguard: Autumn comes,
So much the better!

As to the questions why music does not give feeling immortality through sound, and why it should be so ephemeral in its appeal, there are various things to be said. It is just possible that it may soon come to be recognized that the psychic growth of humanity is more perfectly reflected in music than any where else. Ephemeralness may be predicated of culture-music more certainly than of folk-music, why? Because culture-music often has occupied itself more with the technique than with the content, while folk-music, being the spontaneous expression of feeling must have content. Folk-music, it is true, is simple, but if it be genuine in its feeling I doubt whether it ever loses its power to move. Therefore, in folk-music is possibly made permanent simple states of feeling. Now in culture-music, the development has constantly been

in the direction of the expression of the ultimate spiritual reality of emotions. Music is now actually trying to accomplish what Browning demands of it:

> "Dredging deeper yet,
> Drag into day, — by sound, thy master-net, —
> The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing
> Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
> With limbs' play and life's semblance! There it lies,
> Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
> And marvels, most to love and laud thee for!
> Save it from chance and change we most abhor."

This is true no matter what the emotion may be. Hate may have its "eidolon" as well as love. Above all arts, music has the power of raising evil into a region of the artistically beautiful. Doubt, despair, passion, become blossoms plucked by the hand of God when transmuted in the alembic of the brain of genius — which is not saying that he need experience any of these passions himself. In fact, it is his power of perceiving the eidolon of beauty in modes of passion or emotion not his own that makes him the great genius.

It is doubtless true that whenever in culture-music there has really been content aroused by feeling, no matter what the stage of technique reached, *that* music retains its power to move. It is also highly probably that in the

earlier objective phases of music, even the contemporary audiences were not moved in the sense that we should be moved to-day. The audiences were objective also and their enthusiasm may have been aroused by merely the imitative aspects of music as Avison called them. It is certainly a fact that content and form are more closely linked in music than in any other art. Suppose, however, we imagine the development of melody, counterpoint, harmony, modulation, etc., to be symbolized by a series of concrete materials like clay bricks, silver bricks, gold bricks, diamond bricks; a beautiful thought might take as exquisite a form in bricks of clay as it would in diamond bricks, or diamond bricks might be flung together without any informing thought so that they would attract only the thoughtless by their glitter. But it also follows that, with the increase in the kinds of bricks, there is an increase in the possibilities for subtleties in psychic expression, therefore music to-day is coming nearer and nearer to the spiritual reality of feeling. It requires the awakened soul that Maeterlinck talks about, that is, the soul alive to the spiritual essences of things to recognize this new realm which composers are bringing to us in music.

There are always, at least three kinds of

appreciators of music, those who can see beauty only in the masters of the past, those who can see beauty only in the last new composer, and those who ecstatically welcome beauty past, present and to come. These last are not only psychically developed themselves, but they are able to retain delight in simpler modes of feeling. They may be raised to a seventh heaven of delight by a Bach fugue played on a clavichord by Mr. Dolmetsch, feeling as if angels were ministering unto them, or to a still higher heaven of delight by a Tschaikowsky symphony or a string quartet of Grieg, feeling that here the seraphim continually do cry, or they may enter into the very presence of the most High through some subtly exquisite and psychic song of an American composer, for some of the younger American composers are indeed approaching "Truth's very heart of truth," in their music.

On the whole, one gets rather the impression that the poet has here tackled a problem upon which he did not have great insight. He passes from one mood to another, none of which seem especially satisfactory to himself, and concludes with one of the half-truths of nineteenth-century thought. It is true as far as it goes that forms evolve, and it is a good truth to oppose to the martinets of settled

standards in poetry, music and painting; it is also true that the form is a partial expression of a whole truth, but there is the further truth that, let a work of art be really a work of genius, and the form as well as the content touches the infinite; that is, we have as Browning says in a poem already quoted "Bernard de Mandeville," the very sun in little, or as he makes Abt Vogler say of his music, the broken arc which goes to the formation of the perfect round, or to quote still another poem of Browning's, "Cleon," the perfect rhomb or trapezoid that has its own place in a mosaic pavement.

The poem closes in a rollicking frame of mind, which is not remarkably consistent with the preceding thought, except that the poet seems determined to get all he can out of the music of the past by enlivening it with his own jolly mood. To this end he sets a patriotic poem to the tune of Avison's march, in honor of our old friend, Pym. It is a clever *tour de force* for the words are made to match exactly in rhythm and quantity the notes of the march. Truth to say, the essential goodness of the tune comes out by means of these enlivening words.

XIV

Therefore — bang the drums,
Blow the trumpets, Avison! March-motive? that's

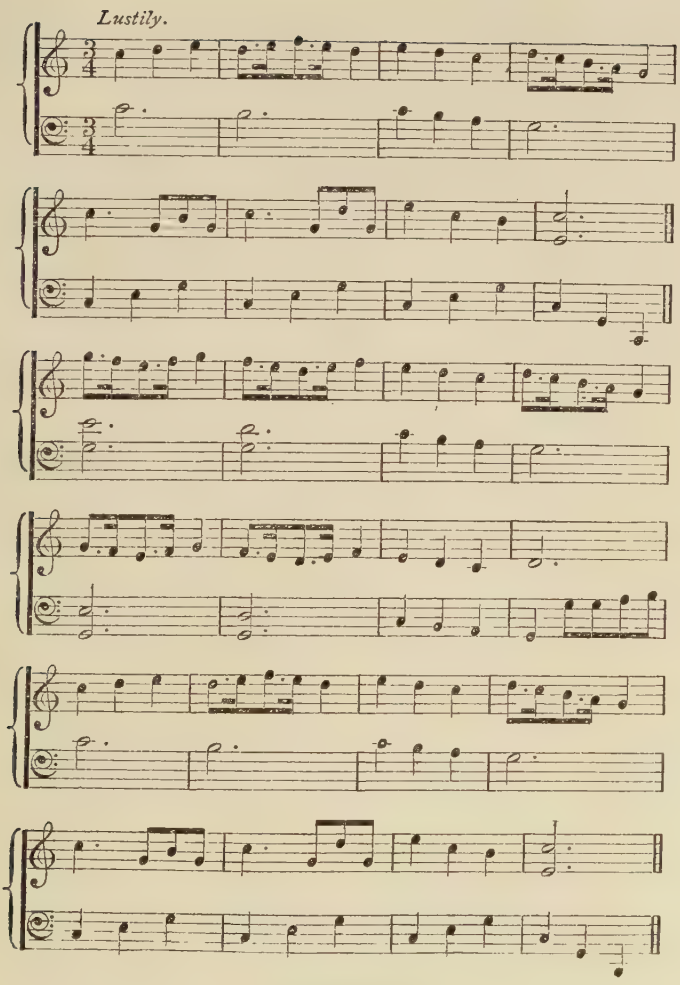
Truth which endures resetting. Sharps and flats,
Lavish at need, shall dance athwart thy score
When ophicleide and bombardon's uproar
Mate the approaching trample, even now
Big in the distance — or my ears deceive —
Of federated England, fitly weave
March-music for the Future!

XV

Or suppose
Back, and not forward, transformation goes?
Once more some sable-stoled procession — say,
From Little-ease to Tyburn — wends its way,
Out of the dungeon to the gallows-tree
Where heading, hacking, hanging is to be
Of half-a-dozen recusants — this day
Three hundred years ago! How duly drones
Elizabethan plain-song — dim antique
Grown clarion-clear the while I humbly wreak
A classic vengeance on thy March! It moans —
Larges and Longs and Breves displacing quite
Crotchet-and-quaver pertness — brushing bars
Aside and filling vacant sky with stars
Hidden till now that day returns to night.

XVI

Nor night nor day: one purpose move us both,
Be thy mood mine! As thou wast minded, Man's
The cause our music champions: I were loth
To think we cheered our troop to Preston Pans
Ignobly: back to times of England's best!
Parliament stands for privilege — life and limb
Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden, Pym,
The famous Five. There's rumor of arrest.



Avison's March

Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark! They protest:
Shall we not all join chorus? Hark the hymn,
— Rough, rude, robustious — homely heart a-throb,
Harsh voises a-hallo, as beseems the mob!
How good is noise! what's silence but despair
Of making sound match gladness never there?
Give me some great glad "subject," glorious Bach,
Where cannon-roar not organ-peal we lack!
Join in, give voice robustious rude and rough, —
Avison helps — so heart lend noise enough!

Fife, trump, drum, sound! and singers then,
Marching, say "Pym, the man of men!"
Up, heads, your proudest — out, throats, your loudest —
"Somerset's Pym!"

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,
Foes, friends, shout "Pym, our citizen!"
Wail, the foes he quelled, — hail, the friends he held,
"Tavistock's Pym!"

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the pen
Teach babes unborn the where and when
— Tyrants, he braved them, —
Patriots, he saved them —
"Westminster's Pym."

Another English musician, Arthur Chappell, was the inspiration of a graceful little sonnet written by the poet in an album which was presented to Mr. Chappell in recognition of his popular concerts in London. Browning was a constant attendant at these. It gives a

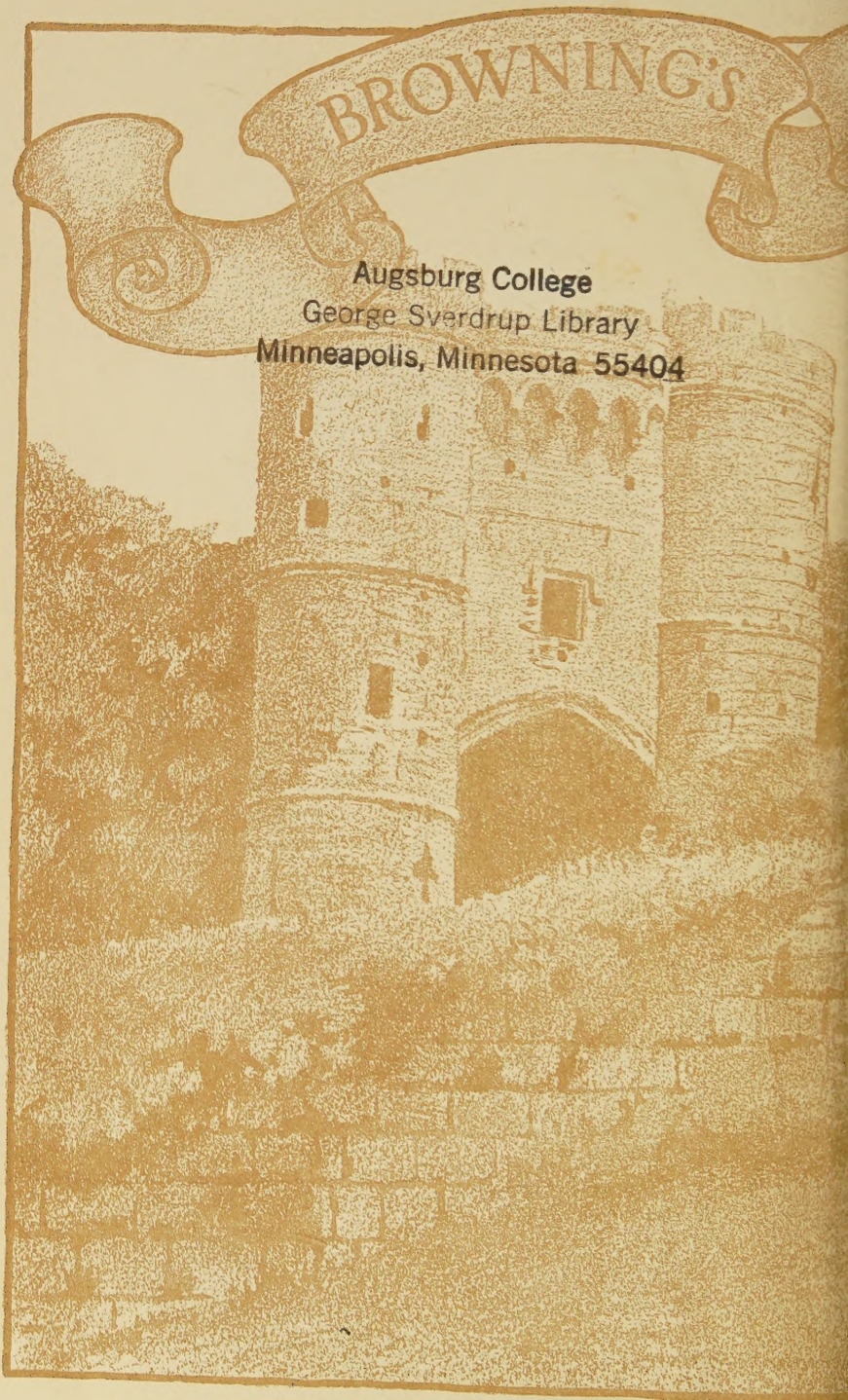
true glimpse of the poet in a highly appreciative mood:

THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST

1884

"Enter my palace," if a prince should say —
"Feast with the Painters! See, in bounteous row,
They range from Titian up to Angelo!"
Could we be silent at the rich survey?
A host so kindly, in as great a way
Invites to banquet, substitutes for show
Sound that's diviner still, and bids us know
Bach like Beethoven; are we thankless, pray?

Thanks, then, to Arthur Chappell, — thanks to him
Whose every guest henceforth not idly vaunts
"Sense has received the utmost Nature grants,
My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
When, night by night, — ah, memory, how it haunts! —
Music was poured by perfect ministrants,
By Halle, Schumann, Piatti, Joachim."



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